اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 12 Yusuf (Joseph)

سُوْرَةُ يُوْسُفَ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate**)**

الٓرٰ ۚ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ۙ

(12-1) Alif. Lam. Ra'. These are the verses of a Book that clearly expounds the truth.

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ۲

(12-2) We have revealed it as a Recitation [1] in Arabic that you may fully understand [2].

(1) The Arabic word Quran “to read” is originally the infinitive form of the verb qara. When the infinitive form of a verb in Arabic is used as a name, it implies that that thing or person possesses the characteristics in their perfection. This Book has been named Quran to indicate that it is meant to be read by all and sundry and is to be read often and over and over again.

(2) This does not mean that this Book has been sent down exclusively for the Arabs. What it means is only this: Of all the people, O Arabs, you should understand the excellence of the Quran, which is a sure proof of its being divine revelation, for it is in your own language and you have no excuse to put forward that it is in a foreign language which you do not understand.

Some people wrongly infer from this verse that this Book had been sent down for the Arabs and not for the non- Arabs; therefore, they assert, it cannot be claimed that it is the guidance for the whole mankind. But obviously this is a frivolous objection raised by those who do not understand its real significance. It is obvious that a book, though meant for universal guidance, will necessarily have to be put in words in some language so that the

people speaking that language should understand its teachings and then become the means of conveying its guidance to other peoples. This is the only natural way of spreading the message of a movement on a universal scale.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ اَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ ۚ وَ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ۝٣

(12-3) (O Muhammad), by revealing the Qur'an to you We narrate to you in the best manner the stories of the past although before this narration you were utterly unaware of them (3).

(3) This was to impress indirectly on the unbelievers of Makkah the fact that the Messenger (peace be upon him) did not know anything about the story of the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt, but was being informed of this by revelation from Allah. This introduction was necessary because, as has been stated in the preface to this Surah, the disbelievers had put an abrupt question concerning this matter in order to expose the Prophet (peace be upon him) by this test. The answer is to this effect: Tell them, O Muhammad (peace be upon him), that, though you did not know anything about the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt before this, you have now received a revelation about this from Us.

اِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِاَبِيْهِ يٰٓاَبَتِ اِنِّيْ رَاَيْتُ اَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَاَيْتُهُمْ لِيْ سٰجِدِيْنَ ۝٤

(12-4) Call to mind when Joseph said to his father: "My father! I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrating themselves before me."

قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلٰٓى اِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيْدُوْا لَكَ كَيْدًا ۭ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝٥

(12-5) His father said: "My son! Do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they hatch a plot to harm you[4]. Indeed Satan is man's open enemy.

(4) As the meanings of the dream were quite obvious, Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) had a genuine fear that Joseph's ten step brothers would become all the more envious of him when they would hear this. So he warned his righteous son not to mention his dream to his brothers, for he knew that those sons of his did not bear the moral character worthy of the sons of a Prophet, and, therefore they were up to any evil design against him out of mere envy. As regards to the dream, the sun in it was Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him), the moon his wife, Prophet Joseph's step mother, and the eleven stars were his eleven brothers.

وَكَذٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيْكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلٰٓى اٰلِ يَعْقُوْبَ كَمَآ اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝

(12-6) (As you have seen in the dream), so will your Lord choose you [5] (for His task) and will impart to you the comprehension of the deeper meaning of things [6] and will bestow the full measure of His favour upon you and upon the house of Jacob even as He earlier bestowed it in full measure upon your forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. Surely your Lord is All- Knowing, All-Wise." [7]

(5) That is, "Bless him with Prophethood."

(6) The Arabic words of the text do not mean merely "the interpretation of dreams", as has been generally understood. They are comprehensive and imply also this: Allah will bless you with the full understanding of the problems of life and their solutions and will give you the insight to reach at the reality of every matter.

(7) Here it should be noted that the response of Prophet Jacob to the dream of Prophet Joseph (peace be upon them), according to the Bible and the Talmud, was quite different from

this: “And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?” (Gen. 37: 10). Even a little thinking will help one to arrive at the conclusion that his reaction as narrated in the Quran is worthy of the high character of Prophet Jacob and not the one found in the Bible and the Talmud. For Prophet Joseph had not expressed any personal ambition of his but merely narrated his dream. If the dream was a true one, and it is obvious that Prophet Jacob interpreted it, believing it to be true, there was no reason why he should rebuke his own son, for it meant that it was the will of God and no his own ambition that he should one day rise to a high rank. Can then one expect from any reasonable person, not to mention a Prophet, that he would take it ill and rebuke the one who dreamed such a dream? And can there ever be such a noble father who would say bitter and stinging things to his own son for the sin of telling him a true dream, prophesying his future greatness?

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِىْ يُوْسُفَ وَاِخْوَتِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ ۝٧

(12-7) Verily in the story of Joseph and his brothers there are many signs for those who inquire (about the truth).

اِذْ قَالُوْا لَيُوْسُفُ وَاَخُوْهُ اَحَبُّ اِلٰٓى اَبِيْنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ ۭ اِنَّ اَبَانَا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنِ ۝٨

(12-8) And call to mind when the brothers of Joseph conferred together and said: "Surely Joseph and his brother [8] are dearer to our father than we are, although we are a group of so many. Our father is clearly mistaken. [9]

(8) This brother was Benjamin. He was the real younger brother of Prophet Joseph, and was his junior by many years. Their mother had died at the birth of Benjamin. That is why Prophet Jacob paid special attention to these two motherless children. Besides, Joseph was the only son, in whom he had discerned signs of righteousness and capabilities. Accordingly, when Prophet Joseph narrated his dream to him, he was all the more convinced of his future greatness, and was perturbed at the idea lest his brothers conspired against him out of envy, if they came to know of his dream, which was self explanatory. For Prophet Jacob knew that his other ten sons were not of the right type, and this was proved by the subsequent events. Therefore, naturally he was not happy with them. It is, however, strange that the Bible gives a different reason for the envy his brothers bore against Prophet Joseph. They were filled with envy against him because Joseph gave unto his father their evil report.

(9) In order to grasp the full significance of the grievance the ten sons had against their father for neglecting them, we should keep in view the conditions of the clannish life. As there was no established state, each clan led its own independent life side by side with other clans. It is obvious that the power of the head of the clan depended entirely on the number of sons and grandsons, and brothers and nephews he had to defend the life, honor and property of the family. Therefore, the one leading the clannish life naturally paid more attention to his own grown up

sons, etc., than to children and women of the family. As Prophet Jacob was leading clannish life, these sons of his expected a preferential treatment from him, but the Prophet thought otherwise. So they remarked: Truly our father seems to have lost his balance of mind; otherwise he could not have neglected us, and loved our two younger brothers more than us, for we are strong young men and can stand him in good stead at the time of need while these youngsters are useless as they themselves stand in need of protection.

اقْتُلُوْا يُوْسُفَ اَوِ اطْرَحُوْهُ اَرْضًا يَّخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ اَبِيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ قَوْمًا صٰلِحِيْنَ ۝٩

(12-9) So either kill Joseph or cast him into some distant land so that your father's attention may become exclusively yours. And after so doing become righteous." (10)

(10) This sentence depicts the true psychology of those people who give themselves up to the lusts of their hearts, and, at the same time, do not want to break away completely from faith and religion. This is how a person of this type behaves. Whenever he is tempted to do a certain evil thing, he makes up his mind to do it first and puts off the demands of his faith for the time being. And if his conscience pricks him, he tries to soothe it, saying: Have a little patience. Let me first do this evil thing, which is an obstacle in my way. Then I will repent and become as good as thou desirest to see me. As the brothers of Prophet Joseph belonged to this type, they soothed their pricking consciences, saying: After doing away with Joseph, who is the chief obstacle in our way, we will again become righteous.

قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ لَا تَقۡتُلُوۡا یُوۡسُفَ وَاَلۡقُوۡهُ فِیۡ غَیٰبَتِ الۡجُبِّ یَلۡتَقِطۡهُ بَعۡضُ السَّیَّارَةِ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ فٰعِلِیۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾

(12-10) Thereupon one of them said: "Do not kill Joseph, but if you are bent upon doing something, cast him down to the bottom of some dark pit, perhaps some caravan passing by will take him out of it."

قَالُوۡا یٰۤاَبَانَا مَا لَکَ لَا تَاۡمَنَّا عَلٰی یُوۡسُفَ وَ اِنَّا لَهٗ لَنٰصِحُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

(12-11) After so deciding they said to their father: "Why is it that you do not trust us regarding Joseph although we are his true well-wishers?"

اَرۡسِلۡهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا یَّرۡتَعۡ وَیَلۡعَبۡ وَ اِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾

(12-12) Send him out with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play while we will be there, standing guard over him." (11)

(11) In this thing also the Quran differs from the Bible and the Talmud, according to which it was not the brothers, who requested their father to send Joseph with them but Prophet Jacob himself sent him with an errand to Shechem, where they were feeding their father’s flocks. Obviously the version of the Quran is more realistic, for Prophet Jacob could never have thought of sending his beloved son with them because he knew it well that they were envious of him, and sending him there would have been sending Joseph deliberately into the jaws of death.

قَالَ اِنِّىۡ لَيَحۡزُنُنِىۡۤ اَنۡ تَذۡهَبُوۡا بِهٖ وَاَخَافُ اَنۡ يَّاۡكُلَهُ الذِّئۡبُ وَاَنۡتُمۡ عَنۡهُ غٰفِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾

(12-13) Their father answered: "It grieves me indeed that you should take him with you for I fear that some wolf might eat him up while you are negligent of him."

قَالُوۡا لَئِنۡ اَكَلَهُ الذِّئۡبُ وَنَحۡنُ عُصۡبَةٌ اِنَّاۤ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

(12-14) They said: "Should a wolf eat him, despite the presence of our strong group, we would indeed be a worthless lot!"

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوۡا بِهٖ وَاَجۡمَعُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّجۡعَلُوۡهُ فِىۡ غَيٰبَتِ الۡجُبِّ وَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمۡ بِاَمۡرِهِمۡ هٰذَا وَهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

(12-15) So when they went away with Joseph and decided to cast him in the bottom of the dark pit, We revealed to Joseph: "Surely a time will come when you will remind them of their deed. They know nothing about the consequence of what they are doing." (12)

(12) The Arabic words “they do not perceive” may very appropriately mean three things. First, We were comforting Joseph, and his brothers were quite unaware of this that a revelation was being sent to him. Second, you will let them know of this evil act of theirs in such circumstances that they can never even imagine you to be there. Third, today they are committing an evil act, but they do not know its future consequences.

There is no mention of this in the Bible and the Talmud that Allah sent a revelation to comfort Prophet Joseph at that time of his affliction. On the contrary, the Talmud says that when he was thrown into the well, Prophet Joseph wept and cried aloud and implored his brothers for mercy, as if he was no better than any other lad of the desert, who would weep and cry if he were to be thrown into a well. But the picture the Quran depicts is that of a young man, who is destined to play the part of a great personality in history.

وَجَآءُوۡۤ اَبَاهُمۡ عِشَآءً يَّبۡكُوۡنَ ۝١٦

(12-16) At nightfall they came to their father weeping

قَالُوۡا يٰۤاَبَانَاۤ اِنَّا ذَهَبۡنَا نَسۡتَبِقُ وَتَرَكۡنَا يُوۡسُفَ عِنۡدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَاَكَلَهُ الذِّئۡبُ وَمَاۤ اَنۡتَ بِمُؤۡمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوۡ كُنَّا صٰدِقِيۡنَ ۝١٧

(12-17) and said: "Father! We went racing with one another and left Joseph behind with our things, and then a wolf came and ate him up. We know that you will not believe us howsoever truthful we might be."

وَجَآءُوۡ عَلٰى قَمِيۡصِهٖ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ؕ قَالَ بَلۡ سَوَّلَتۡ لَكُمۡ اَنۡفُسُكُمۡ اَمۡرًا ؕ فَصَبۡرٌ جَمِيۡلٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ الۡمُسۡتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوۡنَ ۝١٨

(12-18) And they brought Joseph's shirt, stained with false blood. Seeing this their father exclaimed: "Nay (this is not true); rather your evil souls have made it easy for you to commit a heinous act. So I will bear this patiently, and in good grace. (13) It is Allah's help alone that I seek against your fabrication." (14)

(13) The literal meaning of “patience in grace” which implies a patience that enables one to endure all kinds of troubles and afflictions in a calm, self possessed and unemotional manner, without complaining or crying or weeping, as is worthy of great minds.

(14) Prophet Jacob’s reaction to the news of Joseph’s death, as depicted in the Quran, is also different from that given in the Bible and the Talmud. According to them he was upset by the sad news and behaved like an ordinary father. The Bible says: And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins. And mourned for his son many days. (Gen. 37: 34). And the Talmud says that at the sad news Jacob gave himself up to the abandonment of grief, and lay with his face to the ground and refused to be comforted, and cried: Some wild beast has devoured Joseph and I shall never see him more; and he mourned for Joseph for many years. (The Talmud, H. Polano, pp. 78, 79).

When we contrast this picture with the one depicted in the Quran, we clearly see that the Quranic picture is that of a dignified and great personality. He is not upset in the least at hearing the sad news of his beloved son but at once gets to the bottom of the matter, and tells the envious brothers: Your tale is false and fabricated. Then he shows good patience as a Prophet should and puts his trust in the help of God.

وَجَآءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَاَرْسَلُوْا وَارِدَهُمْ فَاَدْلٰى دَلْوَهٗ ؕ قَالَ يٰبُشْرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ ؕ وَاَسَرُّوْهُ بِضَاعَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝١٩

(12-19) And a caravan came, and they sent their water drawer to draw water. As he let down his bucket in the well he (observed Joseph) and cried out: "This is good news. There is a boy." They concealed him, considering him as part of their merchandise, while Allah was well aware of what they did.

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍۢ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُوْدَةٍ ۚ وَكَانُوْا فِيْهِ مِنَ الزّٰهِدِيْنَ ۝٢٠

(12-20) Later they sold him for a paltry sum [15] - just a few dirhams; they did not care to obtain a higher price.

[15] Though the matter of the disposal of Prophet Joseph by his brothers was simple, the Bible has made this very complicated. It is obvious that the brothers threw Joseph into the well and went away. Afterwards a caravan came there and pulled him out and carried him to Egypt where they sold him. But the Bible says that the brothers cast him into a pit: then a company of Ishmaelites came there and they agreed to sell him to them. But in the meantime the Midianite merchantmen had drawn and lifted up Joseph and sold him to the Ishmaelites who brought him into Egypt. (Gen. 37: 25-28). But the authors of the Bible forget this sale transaction and further on in v. 36 say that Prophet Joseph was sold in Egypt by the Midianites and not by the Ishmaelites as stated in v. 28. But the Talmudic version of the matter is a little different from this. It says that the Midianites drew Joseph up from the pit and carried him along with them. As they passed by, the sons of Jacob saw Joseph with them and accused them of stealing their slave. At this a furious quarrel arose and they were ready to enter

upon a bloody fray. But a bargain was concluded and the sons of Jacob sold their brother to the Midianites for twenty pieces of silver, who afterwards sold him to the Ishmaelites for the same amount. Then the Ishmaelites took him into Egypt and sold him there. Incidentally, it is this Talmudic version that has given rise to the tradition among some Muslims that the brothers of Joseph had sold him. But it should be noted that the Quran does not confirm this tradition.

وَقَالَ الَّذِى اشْتَرٰىهُ مِنْ مِّصْرَ لِامْرَاَتِهٖٓ اَكْرِمِىْ مَثْوٰىهُ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا ؕ
وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰٓى اَمْرِهٖ
وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾

(12-21) The man [16] from Egypt who bought him said to his wife [17]: "Take good care of him, possibly he might be of benefit to us or we might adopt him as a son." [18] Thus We found a way for Joseph to become established in that land and in order that We might teach him to comprehend the deeper meaning of things. [19] Allah has full power to implement His design although most people do not know that.

(16) According to the Bible his name was Potiphar. But the Quran mentions him merely by the title (Al-Aziz). As the Quran uses the same title for Prophet Joseph, when he rose to a high rank, it appears that the person held a high office or rank in Egypt, for the word Aziz stands for a powerful person who cannot be opposed and disobeyed. The Bible and the Talmud say that he was an officer of Pharaoh's body guards and captain of the guard. And according to a tradition from Ibn Abbas, related by Ibn Jarir, he was the officer of the royal treasury.

(17) According to the Talmud the name of his wife was Zuleikha and she is known by the same name in the Muslim traditions. As regards to the other tradition among the Muslims that Prophet Joseph married her afterwards, it is neither based on the Quran nor on the history of the Israelites. And the fact is that it is below the dignity of a Prophet to have married such a woman about whom he had personal knowledge that she was of a bad character. And this opinion is confirmed by this general statement

of the Quran: Women of bad character are for men of bad character and men of bad character are for women of bad character. And the women of pure character are for men of pure character, and the men of pure character for the women of pure character. (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 26).

(18) The fact that Potiphar had a very high opinion of Prophet Joseph from the very beginning is also confirmed by the Talmud and the Bible. The Talmud says that at this time Joseph was about eighteen years of age (and) Potiphar was very favorably impressed with his bearing and appearance. So he came to the conclusion that he belonged to some noble family and had been made a slave by the force of adverse circumstances. When the Midianites carried him before Potiphar, he said: He does not look like a slave and I fear he has been stolen from his country and his home. That is why Potiphar did not treat him like a slave, but put him in charge of his house and all his possessions. Likewise the Bible says: And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. (Gen. 39: 6).

(19) This verse alludes to the special training Prophet Joseph needed at that time for the performance of the duties of the high rank to which he was destined to rise. Up to that time, he had been brought up in the desert, under the environment of a semi nomadic life of a shepherd. There was neither any settled state in Canaan and Northern Arabia nor had there been any appreciable progress in culture and civilization, for it was inhabited by different independent clans with no settled government. Thus it is obvious that the training that Prophet Joseph had received in Canaan, had equipped him with the good characteristics of nomadic life coupled with the qualities of God worship and high morality of the family of Prophet Abraham. But this was not enough to enable him to direct the affairs of Egypt, which was at that time one of the most cultured and civilized countries of the known world and required a different experience and training for the conduct of its affairs. The All Powerful Allah made arrangements for this training and sent him to the house of an officer of a very high rank in Egypt, who entrusted him with full

powers over his house and estate. This enabled him to develop all those latent abilities that were needed to fulfill his destiny, and he gained the experience that was required for the efficient conduct of the affairs of the kingdom of Egypt in the years to come.

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗۤ اٰتَيۡنٰهُ حُكۡمًا وَّعِلۡمًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

(12-22) And when Joseph reached the age of maturity, We granted him judgement and knowledge. (20) Thus do We reward those who do good.

(20) By the use of such words as the Quran usually means, We bestowed on him Prophethood, for the Arabic word hukmun stands for both judgment and authority and ilmun stands for that knowledge which is directly revealed to the Prophets by Allah. Thus, the Arabic words of the text will mean: We gave him the power and the authority and the knowledge needed for judging rightly the affairs of the people.

وَرٰوَدَتۡهُ الَّتِىۡ هُوَ فِىۡ بَيۡتِهَا عَنۡ نَّفۡسِهٖ وَغَلَّقَتِ الۡاَبۡوَابَ وَقَالَتۡ هَيۡتَ لَكَ ؕ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ رَبِّىۡۤ اَحۡسَنَ مَثۡوَاىَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفۡلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

(12-23) And it so happened that the lady in whose house Joseph was living, sought to tempt him to herself, and one day bolting the doors she said: "Come on now!" Joseph answered: "May Allah grant me refuge! My Lord has provided an honourable abode for me (so how can I do something so evil)? Such wrong-doers never prosper." (21)

(21) Generally the commentators and translators are of the opinion that Prophet Joseph used Rabbi “My Lord” for the master of the house, and what he meant to imply by way of argument was this: My Lord has treated me very kindly and kept me well in the house. How can I, then, be so disloyal and ungrateful as to commit adultery with his wife? I, however, strongly differ with such a translation and commentary. Though the Arabic usage of rabb admits of such a meaning, I have two strong reasons against this here. First, it is far below the dignity of a Prophet to refrain from a sin because of the regard he had for some person other

than Allah. Second, there is not a single instance in the Quran that a Prophet ever called anyone other than Allah his rabb. Prophet Joseph himself differentiates between his creed and that of the Egyptians making it plain that his rabb “Lord” was Allah, while they had made other human beings their rabb. Then this verse should be considered from another point of view: when rabbi may also mean My Lord, Prophet Joseph might have invoked Allah. Why should then one take the other meaning, my master, which most surely implies something that is against the right creed?

وَلَقَدْ ۖ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوْۗءَ وَالْفَحْشَاۗءَ ۭ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ۝٢٤

(12-24) And she advanced towards him, and had Joseph not perceived a sign (22) from his Lord he too would have advanced towards her. Thus was Joseph shown a sign from his Lord that We might avert from him all evil and indecency, (23) for indeed he was one of Our chosen servants.

(22) “Evidence of his Lord” means inspiration from Allah to rouse his conscience to the fact that it was not worthy of him to yield to the temptation by the woman. As regards to the question, “What was that evidence”, it has been stated in the preceding verse, that is: My Lord has shown much kindness towards me. Should I, then, misbehave like this? Such workers of iniquity never fare well. This was the divine evidence that saved Prophet Joseph in the prime of youth from that great temptation. The significance of “And he would have desired her, if it had not been that he saw the evidence (sign) of his Lord” is this: “Even a Prophet like Joseph could not have been able to save himself from sin, had not Allah guided him rightly with His evidence. Incidentally, this verse makes plain the nature of the immunity of Prophets from sin. It does not mean that a Prophet is infallible and incapable of committing any error, offense or sin or doing wrong or making a mistake. What it means is this: though a Prophet possesses passions, emotions, and carnal desires like other human beings, and is capable of committing a sin, he is so virtuous and God fearing that he never deliberately cherishes any evil intentions,

for he is endowed with such great arguments from his Lord as do not allow the lusts of the flesh overpower the voice of his conscience. And if ever he succumbs inadvertently to any of the human weaknesses, Allah at once sends a revelation to him to set him on the right path. For the consequences of his error do not remain confined to his own person but react on the whole mankind, for even his slightest error might mislead the world to the most horrible sins.

(23) "That We might turn away from him evil and lewdness" implies two things. First, it was because of Our grace that he could perceive Our evidence, and save himself from sin, for We willed to remove indecency and immodesty from Our chosen servant. The second meaning is rather deeper: This incident took place in the life of Joseph because this was essential for his spiritual training: It was Our will to pass him through this hard test so that he should become immune from indecency and immodesty, for he would have to apply all his powers of piety to withstand such a great temptation, and thus become really so strong as not to yield to such things in future as well. The importance and the need of such a hard training becomes quite obvious, if we keep in view the moral conditions of the Egyptian society of that period. We can have a glimpse of this from (Ayats 30-32). It appears that the women in general and the ladies of high society in particular, enjoyed almost the same sexual freedom as is rampant today in the civilized West and in the Westernized East. Allah made arrangements for the special training of Prophet Joseph in the house of his master because he had to perform his divine mission in a perverted society, and that too as a ruler and not as a common man. It is thus obvious from the behavior of those ladies of high rank, who did not feel any shame nor modesty in openly admiring the beauty of the young slave and from that of the lady of the house who was not ashamed of confessing openly that she did her best to tempt him and would continue to do so, that they would have done all they could to allure the young handsome ruler. Thus Allah not only made Prophet Joseph strong enough to resist such temptations in future by passing him through the hard test, but also filled the ladies with despair of gaining any success in this matter.

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيْصَهٗ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَّاَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ ؕ قَالَتْ مَا جَزَآءُ مَنْ اَرَادَ بِاَهْلِكَ سُوْٓءًا اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّسْجَنَ اَوْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۲۵﴾

(12-25) Then both of them rushed to the door, each seeking to get ahead of the other, and she tore Joseph's shirt from behind. Then both of them found the husband of the lady at the door. Seeing him she said: "What should be the punishment of him who has foul designs on your wife except that he should be imprisoned or subjected to painful chastisement?"

قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِيْ عَنْ نَّفْسِيْ ۚ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ۚ اِنْ كَانَ قَمِيْصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿۲۶﴾

(12-26) Joseph said: "It is she who was trying to tempt me to herself." And a witness belonging to her own household testified [24] (on grounds of circumstantial evidence): "If his shirt is torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he is a liar.

(24) It appears that when the master of the house came on the scene, he was accompanied by a person of his wife's household. When he heard the story of the incident, he made this proposal: As each of them accuses the other and there is no eye witness of what happened between the two, the matter should be decided by the help of the circumstantial evidence, by examining the condition of Joseph's shirt. Obviously this was a very reasonable way of deciding the matter, and there was, therefore, no need to resort to a miracle. According to some traditions this witness was an infant, lying in the cradle, whom Allah had given the power of speech for giving this evidence. As this story is not supported by any authority, there is no reason why the obvious, plain and reasonable thing should not be accepted that the witness was a wise and experienced member of the family of the wife, instead of having resort to a miracle based on an unauthentic tradition.

وَ اِنْ كَانَ قَمِيْصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾

(12-27) But if his shirt is torn from behind, then she has lied, and he is truthful." (25)

(25) This is what was implied in the evidence: If Joseph's shirt is torn from the front, it means that Joseph is the aggressor and she has struggled to defend her honor. But if the shirt is rent from the back, it is obvious that he must have been running away from her and she must have been tugging from behind. The circumstantial evidence implied another thing. As the witness invited the master's attention to Prophet Joseph's shirt only, it meant that there was no sign at all of violence on the garments of the woman, for had he been the aggressor, there must have been some signs of violence on her garments.

(25a) A comparative study of the story as given in the Quran and in the Bible and the Talmud will be worthwhile. The Bible says: And she caught him by his garment, saying: Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand and fled, and got himself out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying: See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got himself out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home...And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying: After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound. (Gen. 39: 12-16, 19-20).

The clumsy manner of the above version is obvious. It appears from this that Prophet Joseph's garment was so shaped that the whole of it fell into her hands when she tugged it. Then he ran away all naked, leaving it with her, as if to supply her with a clear proof of his own guilt.

Now let us turn to the Talmud. It says: ....hearing the accusation, Potiphar commanded at once that the lad should be whipped severely. Then he carried Joseph before the judges.....They ordered that the torn garment should be brought to them and upon an examination of the same, they pronounced Joseph not guilty. (The Talmud Selections, H. Polano, pp. 81-82). Obviously this version is also faulty, for it cannot be imagined that a person of such a high rank would himself take the case to a court that his own slave had tried to assault his wife criminally. Incidentally, this Quranic version of the story is a clear proof of the fact that it has no copied stories from the Israelite traditions as the pseudo-orientalists allege, but has, on the other hand, corrected them and told the real facts to the world.

فَلَمَّا رَاٰ قَمِيۡصَهٗ قُدَّ مِنۡ دُبُرٍ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ مِنۡ كَيۡدِكُنَّ ؕ اِنَّ كَيۡدَكُنَّ عَظِيۡمٌ ۝٢٨

(12-28) So when the husband saw Joseph's shirt torn from behind he exclaimed: "Surely, this is one of the tricks of you women; your tricks are indeed great.

يُوۡسُفُ اَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡ هٰذَا ۚ وَ اسۡتَغۡفِرِىۡ لِذَنۡۢبِكِ ۖ اِنَّكِ كُنۡتِ مِنَ الۡخَاطِـئِيۡنَ ۝٢٩

(12-29) Joseph, disregard this. And you - woman - ask forgiveness for your sin, for indeed it is you who has been at fault."

وَقَالَ نِسۡوَةٌ فِى الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ امۡرَاَتُ الۡعَزِيۡزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتٰىهَا عَنۡ نَّفۡسِهٖ ۚ قَدۡ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ؕ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىهَا فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۝٣٠

(12-30) And some ladies in the city began to say: "The chief's wife, violently in love with her houseboy, is out to tempt him. We think she is clearly mistaken."

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتۡ بِمَكۡرِهِنَّ اَرۡسَلَتۡ اِلَيۡهِنَّ وَ اَعۡتَدَتۡ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَـاً وَّ اٰتَتۡ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنۡهُنَّ سِكِّيۡنًا وَّ قَالَتِ اخۡرُجۡ عَلَيۡهِنَّ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَاَيۡنَهٗۤ اَكۡبَرۡنَهٗ وَقَطَّعۡنَ اَيۡدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلۡنَ حٰشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا هٰذَا بَشَرًا ؕ اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيۡمٌ ۝٣١

(12-31) Hearing of their sly talk the chief's wife sent for those ladies, and arranged for them a banquet, and got ready couches, (26) and gave each guest a knife. Then, while they were cutting and eating the fruit, she signalled Joseph: "Come out to them." When the ladies saw him they were so struck with admiration that they cut their hands, exclaiming: "Allah preserve us. This is no mortal human. This is nothing but a noble angel!"

(26) The ancient Egyptians used to place pillows and cushions in such feasts for the guests to recline. And this is confirmed by the archaeological remains in Egypt.

There is no mention at all of this banquet in the Bible but it has been described in the Talmud in a way quite different from that of the Quran. Needless to say that while this narrative in the Quran is natural, life like and teaches moral lessons, the one in the Talmud lacks all these things.

قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ الَّذِيْ لُمْتُنَّنِيْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَ لَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ؕ وَ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَاۤ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَ لَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾

(12-32) She said: "So now you see! This is the one regarding whom you reproached me. Indeed I tried to tempt him to myself but he held back, although if he were not to follow my order, he would certainly be imprisoned and humiliated." (27)

(27) This open demonstration of her love and declaration of her immoral designs show that the moral condition of the higher class of the Egyptian society had declined to the lowest ebb. It is quite obvious that the women whom she had invited must have been ladies belonging to the upper most stratum of the society. The very fact that she presented her beloved before them without any hesitation, in order to convince them of his beauty and youth that had urged her to fall in love with him, shows that there was nothing uncommon in this demonstration. Then these ladies did not reproach her but themselves practically demonstrated that, in those circumstances, they themselves would have done the same that she did. Above all, the hostess did not feel that it was immodest to declare openly: No doubt, I sought to seduce him

and he succeeded in escaping from me. Yet I am not going to give him up. If he will not do as I bid him, he shall be cast into prison and humbled and disgraced.

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَیَّ مِمَّا یَدْعُوْنَنِیْۤ اِلَیْهِ ۚ وَ اِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّیْ كَیْدَهُنَّ اَصْبُ اِلَیْهِنَّ وَ اَكُنْ مِّنَ الْجٰهِلِیْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾

(12:33) Joseph said: "My Lord! I prefer imprisonment to what they ask me to do. And if You do not avert from me the guile of these women, I will succumb to their attraction and lapse into ignorance." (28)

(28) In order to grasp the full significance of this prayer of Prophet Joseph, we should try to form a mental picture of the circumstances in which he was placed at that time. In the light of this passage the picture will be something like this. There is the handsome young man of twenty in the prime of his life, who has brought health and vigor of youth from the desert into Egypt, after passing through the ordeal of forced slavery and exile. Fortune has placed him in the house of one of the highest dignitaries in the capital of the most civilized country of the world at the time. There this handsome young man meets in the prime of life with a strange experience. The lady of the house in which he has to live day and night falls passionately in love with him and begins to tempt and seduce him. Then the fame of his beauty spreads all over the capital and the other ladies of the town also become enamored of him. Now this is the critical position. He is surrounded on all sides by hundreds of beautiful snares that have been spread to entrap and catch him unaware. All sorts of devices are employed to excite his passions and entice him: wherever he goes he encounters sin lying in ambush with all its charms and allurements and waiting for an opportune moment to make a surprise attack upon him. Such are the circumstances that are tempting him with sin, but the pious young man successfully passes through the ordeal, set for him by Satan, with the self control that is praiseworthy indeed. But it is all the more praiseworthy that he does not feel any pride for showing such extraordinary piety in such trying and tempting circumstances. On the other hand, he very humbly invokes his Lord to protect

him from those traps of sin, for he is afraid of the common human weaknesses and cries out: My Lord, I am weak. I fear lest these temptations should overpower me, I would rather prefer imprisonment to doing such an evil thing into which they are tempting to ensnare me.

In fact, that was the most important and critical period of Prophet Joseph's training, and this hard ordeal helped to bring forth all his latent virtues of which he himself was unaware up to that time. Then he himself realized that Allah had endowed him with the high and extraordinary qualities of honesty, fidelity, piety, charity, righteousness, self control, balance of mind, and he made full use of these when he gained power in Egypt.

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۳۴﴾

(12-34) Thereupon his Lord granted his prayer, and averted their guile from him. (29) Surely He alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

(29) Allah warded off their guile from Prophet Joseph by strengthening his character in such a way as to make ineffective all their devices to ensnare him, This also implies that Allah opened the door of prison for him in order to keep him safe from their tricks and temptations.

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿۳۵﴾

(12-35) Then it occurred to them to cast Joseph into prison for a while even though they had seen clear signs (30) (of Joseph's innocence and of the evil ways of their ladies).

(30) It occurred to them to imprison Prophet Joseph in order to save face after they had seen clear proofs of his innocence and of the guilt of their own women, for no other alternative was left, in their opinion, to undo the scandal that was spreading fast in the land. But it did not occur to them that in fact his imprisonment was his moral victory and the moral defeat of the rulers and the dignitaries of Egypt. By that time, Prophet Joseph

had not remained an unknown person, for all and sundry had heard stories of his beauty and piety, and of the love the ladies had shown towards him. Therefore when those wise courtiers put into practice their plausible device to imprison him in order to reverse the doings of their ladies, the common people must have drawn their own conclusions for they knew Prophet Joseph to be a man of pure, strong and high character. So it was obvious to them that he had committed no crime to merit imprisonment, and that he had been imprisoned because it was an easier way of escape for the chiefs of Egypt than to keep their own ladies under control.

Incidentally, this shows that imprisonment of innocent people without trial and due procedure of law is as old as civilization itself. The dishonest rulers of today are not much different from the wicked rulers who governed Egypt some four thousand years ago. The only difference between the two is that they did not imprison people in the name and for the cause of democracy but they committed unlawful acts without any pretext of law. On the contrary, their modern descendants make use of the specious pretenses of honesty when they are acting unjustly. They first enact the necessary unlawful laws to justify their unlawful practices and then lawfully imprison their victims. That is to say, the Egyptian rulers were honest in their dishonesty and did not hide the fact that they were imprisoning people to safeguard their own interests, and not those of the community. But these modern disciples of Satan cast innocent people into prison to ward off the danger they feel from them, but proclaim to the world that their victims are a menace to the country and the community. In short, they were mere tyrants but these are shameless liars as well.

وَ دَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانِ ؕ قَالَ اَحَدُهُمَآ اِنِّیۡۤ اَرٰىنِیۡۤ اَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ؕ وَقَالَ الۡاٰخَرُ اِنِّیۡۤ اَرٰىنِیۡۤ
اَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَاۡسِیۡ خُبْزًا تَاۡكُلُ الطَّيۡرُ مِنۡهُ ؕ نَبِّئۡنَا بِتَاۡوِيۡلِهٖ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الۡمُحْسِنِيۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾

(12-36) And with Joseph two [31] other slaves entered the prison. [32] One of them said: "I saw myself pressing wine in a dream"; and the other said: "I saw myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds were eating." Both said: "Tell us what is

its interpretation; for we consider you to be one of those who do good." (33)

(31) At the time when Prophet Joseph was sent to prison, he probably was about twenty years old. This has been inferred from two statements in the Quran and the Talmud. The Quran (Ayat 42) says that....he remained in the prison for a decade or so and the Talmud says that ...Joseph was thirty years old when he was elevated to his honorable and trustworthy position.

(32) One of the two prisoners, according to the Bible, was the chief of the butlers of the king of Egypt, and the other the chief of the bakers. And according to the Talmud, they were condemned to the prison because during a feast stone grits were found in the bread and a fly in the wine.

(33) The fact that two prisoners attested his righteousness shows that Prophet Joseph was held in high esteem in the prison. Otherwise there was no reason why the two should have requested him alone to interpret the dreams and paid their homage like this: We have seen that you are a righteous man. It clearly means that the events narrated in the preceding verses had reached all and sundry and the people, inside the prison and outside it, knew that he had not been guilty of any crime or sin. On the other hand, he had proved himself to be a noble soul who had come out successful in the hardest test of his piety. So much so that there was not the like of him in piety, not even among their own religious leaders in the whole country. That is why not only the prisoners but also the officers and officials of the prison looked upon him as an honorable man and had full confidence in him. The Bible confirms this: And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand. (Gen. 39: 22-23).

قَالَ لَا يَاْتِيْكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهٖٓ اِلَّا نَبَّاْتُكُمَا بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَكُمَا ۭ ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ ۭ اِنِّيْ تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ۝٣٧

(12-37) Joseph said: "I will inform you about the interpretation of the dreams before the arrival of the food that is sent to you. This knowledge is part of what I have been taught by my Lord. I have renounced the way of those who do not believe in Allah, and who deny the Hereafter,

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ اٰبَآءِیْۤ اِبْرٰهِیْمَ وَ اِسْحٰقَ وَ یَعْقُوْبَ ؕ مَا كَانَ لَنَاۤ اَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شَیْءٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ عَلَیْنَا وَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

(12-38) and I have adopted the way of my forefathers - Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is not for us to associate any with Allah in His Divinity. It is out of Allah's grace upon us and upon mankind (that He did not require of us to serve any other than Allah), and yet most people do not give thanks.

یٰصٰحِبَیِ السِّجْنِ ءَاَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَیْرٌ اَمِ اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿۳۹﴾

(12-39) Fellow-prisoners! Is it better that there be diverse lords, or just Allah, the One, the Irresistible?

مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسْمَآءً سَمَّیْتُمُوْهَاۤ اَنْتُمْ وَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ اَمَرَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اِیَّاهُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّیْنُ الْقَیِّمُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۴۰﴾

(12-40) Those whom you serve beside Him are merely idle names that you and your fathers have fabricated, without Allah sending down any sanction for them. All authority to govern rests only with Allah. He has commanded that you serve none but Him. This is the Right Way of life, though most people are altogether unaware.

یٰصٰحِبَیِ السِّجْنِ اَمَّاۤ اَحَدُكُمَا فَیَسْقِیْ رَبَّهٗ خَمْرًا ؕ وَ اَمَّا الْاٰخَرُ فَیُصْلَبُ فَتَاْكُلُ الطَّیْرُ مِنْ رَّاْسِهٖ ؕ قُضِیَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِیْ فِیْهِ تَسْتَفْتِیٰنِ ﴿۴۱﴾

(12-41) Fellow-prisoners! (This is the interpretation of your dreams): one of you will serve wine to his lord (the king of Egypt).As for the other, he will be crucified and birds will eat of his head. The question concerning what you asked has thus been decided." (34)

(34) This discourse, which is the soul of this story, and is one of the best on the doctrine of Tauhid in the Quran itself, finds no place at all in the Bible and the Talmud. This is because they regard him merely as a wise and pious man and not as a Prophet. That is why Rev. Rodwell has, in regard to this passage, accused Muhammad (peace be upon him) of putting his own doctrine and conviction into the mouth of Joseph (peace be upon him). But the Quran not only puts forward and presents these two aspects of his life in a much better and clearer way but also presents him as a Prophet, who had started propagating the message even in the prison.

As this discourse suggests several very important things, it will be worthwhile to consider these one by one:

(1) This is the first occasion on which Prophet Joseph appears to have begun the preaching of the true faith. For before this, the Quran reveals him in the different stages of his life as a man of high morality but does not say anything to show that he conveyed the message also. From this it is clear that those stages were of a preparatory nature and the mission of Prophethood was entrusted to him at the stage of his imprisonment and this was his first discourse as a Prophet.

(2) Moreover, this was the first occasion when he revealed his identity to others. Before this, we find him bearing patiently everything that happened to him without revealing anything about his relationships with Prophet Abraham and others. He kept silent when the caravan made him a slave and carried him to Egypt, when Al-Aziz bought him and when he was sent to prison. As Prophet Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (peace be upon them all) were quite well known, he might have used their names to his advantage. The members of the caravan, both the Ishmaelites and the Midianites, were closely related to his family, and the Egyptians were, at least, familiar with the name of Prophet Abraham. Nay, the way in which Prophet Joseph mentioned their names in this discourse, shows that the fame of his father, grandfather and great grandfather had reached Egypt. But in spite of this, Prophet Joseph did not use their names on any

of the critical occasions to save himself from the plight in which he was placed. This shows that probably he himself knew that these things were inevitable for his training for the mission for which Allah had chosen him. Now it was absolutely necessary for him, for the sake of his mission, to reveal this fact in order to show that he was not presenting any new faith but the same faith that was preached by Prophets Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (peace be upon them all). This was necessary because the message demanded that it should not be presented with the claim that it was a new and novel thing but that it was the same universal and eternal truth that has always been presented by its bearers.

(3) This teaches us that one can, like Prophet Joseph, carve out a way for the propagation of the message, if one has the intention and the required wisdom. The two men pay their homage to him and request him to interpret their dreams. In answer to this he says: I will tell their interpretations but let me first inform you about the source of my knowledge that enables me to understand dreams. Thus he takes advantage of their request and preaches his own faith to them. We learn from this that if a person is imbued with the true and strong desire for propagating the truth, he can very gracefully turn the direction of the conversation towards the message he desires to convey. On the contrary, if a person has no strong desire for the propagation of the message, he never finds any opportunity for it, even though hundred and one such opportunities might have come his way which could have been utilized for this purpose. But one must be on his guard to discriminate between the right use of an opportunity by a wise man from the crude propagation of a foolish and uncultured person, who tries to thrust the message into the ears of unwilling hearers and succeeds only in creating aversion for it in their minds because of his crude way of presentation.

(4) This also teaches the right procedure that should be followed in presenting the message. Prophet Joseph does not present, at the very start, the details of the creed and regulations of the faith but the most fundamental thing that distinguishes a believer from a non-believer, that is, the distinction between Tauhid and shirk. Then he presents it in such a rational manner as cannot fail to convince any man of common sense. And his argument must have impressed deeply on the

minds of the two slaves. Which is better, various gods or One Omnipotent Allah? They knew it from their personal experience that it was much better to serve one master than a number of them. Therefore it was far better to serve the Lord of the universe than His servants. Moreover, he does not invite them directly to accept his faith and discard their own faith, but he very wisely draws their attention to this fact; This is Allah's bounty upon us and upon all mankind that He has not made us the servants of any other than Himself, yet most of the people are not grateful to Him. Instead of serving Him alone, they invent gods for themselves and worship them. Then it is also noteworthy that his criterion of the faith of his addressees is based on wisdom and has no tinge of bitterness in it. He says: The gods whom you call, the god of wealth or the god of health or the god of prosperity or the god of rain etc. are mere names you have given them without any reality behind them. The real Owner of everything is the Supreme Allah Whom you also acknowledge as the Creator and the Lord of the whole universe. He has sent no authority and given no sanction to anyone for Godhead and worship, but has reserved all the powers, all the rights and all the authorities for Himself, and commanded, "Serve and worship none but Me."

(5) It may also be inferred from this discourse that Prophet Joseph must have made full use of this opportunity of a decade for the propagation of the message. Some people think that that was the only time when he extended the invitation to the message. This is wrong for two reasons. First, it is absurd to imagine that a Prophet could have been neglectful of his mission for a long period. Second, it cannot be imagined that the person who availed himself of the opportunity when two men approached him for the interpretation of their dreams, could ever have passed a decade of imprisonment without propagating the message entrusted to him by his Lord.

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِىۡ ظَنَّ اَنَّهٗ نَاجٍ مِّنۡهُمَا اذۡكُرۡنِىۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّكَ فَاَنۡسٰىهُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ ذِكۡرَ رَبِّهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِى السِّجۡنِ بِضۡعَ سِنِيۡنَ ۝۴۲

(12-42) And Joseph said to the one of the two prisoners who he knew would be set free: "Mention me in your lord's presence." But Satan caused him to forget mentioning this to his

lord (the ruler of Egypt) and so Joseph languished in prison for several years. (35)

(35) Some commentators have interpreted it like this: Satan made Prophet Joseph neglectful of his Lord, Allah, so he placed his confidence in a man rather than Allah and desired him to mention him to his lord, the king, for his release. So Allah punished him by letting him languish several years in the dungeon. In fact, such an interpretation is absolutely erroneous for as Allamah Ibn Kathir and some early commentators like Mujahid, Muhammad-bin-Ishaq and some others say, the pronoun him refers to that person who he thought would be released. Therefore it will mean: Satan made him (the would be free man) so neglectful that he forgot to mention him (Prophet Joseph) to his lord (the king). They also cite a tradition in support of their interpretation to this effect. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If Prophet Joseph had not said that what he said, he would not have remained in imprisonment for several years. But Allamah Ibn Kathir says: This Hadith cannot be accepted because all the ways in which it has been reported are weak. Moreover, two of the reporters, Sufyan-bin-Wakii and Ibrahim-bin-Yazid, are not trustworthy. Besides being weak on technical grounds, it is also against the dictates of common sense: if a wronged person adopted some measures for his release, he cannot be considered to be neglectful of God and guilty of the lack of trust in Allah.

وَ قَالَ الۡمَلِکُ اِنِّیۡۤ اَرٰی سَبۡعَ بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ یَّاۡکُلُہُنَّ سَبۡعٌ عِجَافٌ وَّسَبۡعَ سُنۡۢبُلٰتٍ خُضۡرٍ وَّ اُخَرَ یٰبِسٰتٍ ؕ یٰۤاَیُّہَا الۡمَلَاُ اَفۡتُوۡنِیۡ فِیۡ رُءۡیَایَ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ لِلرُّءۡیَا تَعۡبُرُوۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾

(12-43) And once (36) the king said: "I have dreamt that there are seven fat cows and seven lean cows are devouring them, and there are seven fresh green ears of corn and seven others dry and withered. My nobles! Tell me what is the interpretation of this dream, if you are well-versed in interpretation of dreams." (37)

(36) Leaving the account of the events of the intervening years of imprisonment, the story has been resumed from the time when Prophet Joseph began to rise in worldly rank.

(37) According to the Bible and the Talmud, the king was greatly disturbed, troubled and confused because of these dreams. So he proclaimed throughout the entire land of Egypt, and called upon all the wise men, and the soothsayers, and magicians of the land to interpret his dreams.

قَالُوۡۤا اَضۡغَاثُ اَحۡلَامٍ ۚ وَمَا نَحۡنُ بِتَاۡوِيۡلِ الۡاَحۡلَامِ بِعٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۴۴﴾

(12-44) They said: "These are confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams."

وَقَالَ الَّذِىۡ نَجَا مِنۡهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعۡدَ اُمَّةٍ اَنَا اُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِتَاۡوِيۡلِهٖ فَاَرۡسِلُوۡنِ ﴿۴۵﴾

(12-45) Then of the two prisoners, the one who had been set free, now remembered, after the lapse of a long period, what Joseph had said. He said: "I will tell you the interpretation of this dream; just send me (to Joseph in prison)." (38)

(38) The Quran has told in brief the essence of the request of the chief butler, but the Bible and the Talmud have given its details. According to these (and it stands to reason that it must have been so), he told the king of the life of Prophet Joseph in prison and how he interpreted their dreams rightly and prayed the king to give him leave to see Prophet Joseph in prison for that purpose.

يُوۡسُفُ اَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيۡقُ اَفۡتِنَا فِىۡ سَبۡعِ بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ يَّاۡكُلُهُنَّ سَبۡعٌ عِجَافٌ وَّسَبۡعِ سُنۡۢبُلٰتٍ خُضۡرٍ وَّاُخَرَ يٰبِسٰتٍ ۙ لَّعَلِّىۡۤ اَرۡجِعُ اِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۶﴾

(12-46) Then he went to Joseph and said to him: "Joseph, O truthfulness incarnate, (39) tell the true meaning of the dream in which seven fat cows are devoured by seven lean ones; and there are seven green ears of corn and seven others dry and withered so that I may return to the people and they may learn." (40)

(39) The Arabic word Siddiq is used for the one who is an embodiment of truth and righteousness. Thus it shows that the butler had been so deeply impressed with the pure character of

Prophet Joseph that even years had failed to blot it from his heart. For its meaning please refer to (E.N. 99 of Surah An-Nisa).

(40) That is, they might understand your true worth and realize their own error in keeping you in prison without any just cause. And in a way I may get the opportunity of fulfilling the promise I made with you during my imprisonment.

قَالَ تَزْرَعُوْنَ سَبْعَ سِنِيْنَ دَاَبًا فَمَا حَصَدْتُّمْ فَذَرُوْهُ فِيْ سُنْۢبُلِهٖٓ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ۝٤٧

(12-47) Joseph said: "You will cultivate consecutively for seven years. Leave in the ears all that you have harvested except the little out of which you may eat.

ثُمَّ يَاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَّاْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّا تُحْصِنُوْنَ ۝٤٨

(12-48) Then there will follow seven years of great hardship in which you will eat up all you have stored earlier, except the little that you may set aside.

ثُمَّ يَاۡتِىۡ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِكَ عَامٌ فِيۡهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيۡهِ يَعۡصِرُوۡنَ ۝۴۹

(12-49) Then there will come a year when people will be helped by plenty of rain and they will press (grapes)." (41)

(41) The literal meaning of yasiroon is: “they will press.” Here it has been used to denote that state of verdure which was going to prevail after the famine years because of rainfall and flood in the Nile. For, when the land will be watered, there will be abundance of seed to press oil, and abundance of fruit to press juice and abundance of fodder for cattle to press milk out of them. It should be noted that Prophet Joseph not only interpreted the king’s dream but also told them how to preserve and reserve grain during the first seven years of prosperity for the subsequent seven years of famine. Moreover he foretold the good news of prosperity after the seven years of famine, though there was no hint of this in the dream of the king.

وَقَالَ الۡمَلِكُ ائۡتُوۡنِىۡ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُ الرَّسُوۡلُ قَالَ ارۡجِعۡ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ فَسۡـَٔـلۡهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسۡوَةِ الّٰتِىۡ قَطَّعۡنَ اَيۡدِيَهُنَّ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىۡ بِكَيۡدِهِنَّ عَلِيۡمٌ ۝۵۰

(12-50) The king said: "Bring this man to me." But when the royal messenger came to Joseph he said: (42) "Go back to your master and ask him about the case of the women who had cut their hands. Surely my Lord has full knowledge of their guile." (43)

(42) There is no mention in the Bible and the Talmud of this most important part of the story that Prophet Joseph declined to quit the prison till his character was cleared. On the other hand, according to the Bible: Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And the Talmud depicts even a more degrading picture of the event. It says: The king ordered that Joseph should be brought before him. But he commanded his officers to be careful not to frighten the lad, lest through fear he should be unable to interpret correctly. And the servant of the king brought Joseph forth from his dungeon, and shaved him and clothed him in new garments, and carried him before the king. The king was seated upon his throne,

and the glare and glitter of the jewels which ornamented the throne dazzled and astonished the eyes of Joseph. Now the throne of the king was reached by seven steps, and it was the custom of Egypt for a prince or noble who held audience with the king, to ascend to the sixth step; but when an inferior or a private citizen of the land was called into his presence, the king descended to the third step and from there spoke with him. (The Talmud, H. Polano, pp. 87-88).

A comparison of the degrading picture in the Talmud with this self respecting grand, and noble picture depicted in the Quran will convince every unbiased critic that the one in the Quran is worthy of a Prophet of God. Moreover the picture in the Talmud is open to a grave objection: Had Prophet Joseph behaved like a frightened and cringing lad who was so dazzled by the glitter and glare of the jewels of the throne that he bowed to the ground, how was it that the king and the courtiers were so impressed by him that they declared, "……the Hebrew has proved himself wise and skillful and through his wisdom shall our country be saved the pangs of want"? So much so that the king appointed him, without demur as governor over the land, second only to himself. All this shows that by that time he had proved his moral and mental superiority and had enhanced it by his refusal to quit the prison without proving his innocence. Otherwise, they would have never raised him to the highest rank in such a civilized and advanced country as Egypt.

(43) He demanded an inquiry into the matter not because he himself had any doubt of his innocence, but because he was perfectly confident of this: My Lord has full knowledge of my innocence and of their cunning. But your lord should also make a thorough inquiry as to why I had been sent to prison, for I do not want to go before the public with any blemish or blot on my reputation. Therefore a public inquiry should be held to prove that I was an innocent victim of the injustice of the chiefs and nobles of the country, who had cast me into prison in order to cover up the guilt of their own ladies.

The words in which the demand was made clearly show that the king was already fully acquainted with the details of the incident that had happened at the banquet of the wife of Al-Aziz. That is why a mere reference to it was enough. Another noteworthy thing in this demand was that Prophet Joseph did not in any way hint at the part the wife of Al- Aziz had played in the event. This is another proof of his noble character that he did not like to involve and entangle the wife of his benefactor in the matter, even though she had done him her worst.

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ اِذْ رٰوَدْتُّنَّ يُوْسُفَ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ؕ قُلْنَ حٰشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ؕ
قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْـٰٔنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ ۫ اَنَا رٰوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾

(12-51) Thereupon the king asked the women: (44) "What happened when you sought to tempt Joseph?" They said: "Allah forbid! We found no evil in him." The chief's wife said: "Now the truth has come to light. It was I who sought to tempt him. He is indeed truthful." (45)

(44) As regards to the way in which this inquiry was held, it is just possible that the king might have summoned the women to his presence or gotten their evidence through a trusted officer of his court.

(45) The inquiry and the evidences must have helped to pave the way for Prophet Joseph’s rise in the land by concentrating the public attention on him, especially under the circumstances when the inquiry had been demanded by him. He had interpreted the dream of the king, when all the wise men, sooth sayers and the magicians had failed. Then he had refused to quit prison even though the king himself had ordered that he should be brought before him, and, instead of this, demanded an inquiry of the matter which had been the cause of his imprisonment. Naturally this thing would have filled the people with wonder and they would have been looking eagerly for the result of the inquiry. Thus it can be imagined how the evidences and the result of the inquiry raised his prestige so high that the king and his courtiers declared that he was the only fit person to save the country from

the coming calamity. It is no wonder, then, that Prophet Joseph proposed that all the resources of the land should be placed in his hands, and the king accepted this proposal as soon as it was made. For, had it been merely the matter of the interpretation of a dream, the most he would have deserved was some reward and his release from prison. But he could not have said: Place the resources of the land in my hands, and the king would not have readily acceded to his proposal and given him all the powers in the land, as is contained in (Ayats 55-56), and confirmed by the Bible and the Talmud.

ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّىْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِىْ كَيْدَ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ۝٥٢

(12-52) Joseph said: (46) "I did this so that he [i.e. the chief) may know that I did not betray him in his absence, and that Allah does not allow the design of the treacherous to succeed.

(46) Prophet Joseph might have said these words in the prison when he came to know the result of the inquiry. But some commentators, including great scholars like Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn Kathir, regard this sentence to be a continuation of the preceding speech of the wife of Al-Aziz. They argue that this sentence has been placed contiguous to her preceding speech without any dividing word between them to indicate that her speech had ended at “indeed, he is surely of the truthful”, and that the succeeding words were spoken by Prophet Joseph. They construe that if two speeches made by two different persons are placed in contiguity, they must be separated by means of some definite word, or there must be some definite clue to it. As neither of these two things exists in this case, it may rightly be construed that the words contained in (Ayat 52) are the continuation of her preceding speech in (Ayat 51). I, however, am surprised how a great scholar of Ibn Taimiyyah’s insight has missed this point that the characteristic of a speech is in itself a clear and selfsufficient clue. Her confession in (Ayat 51) fits in with her low character, but obviously the succeeding dignified and grand speech in (Ayat 52) is too high for her. That fits in only with the noble character of Prophet Joseph. It is obvious that this must have been uttered by one, who was righteous, generous, humble and God fearing. It is

by itself a clear evidence that it could not have come out of the mouth of the one, who said: Come here, and what punishment does the one deserve, who shows evil intentions towards your wife? And if he will not yield to my bidding, he shall be cast into prison. On the other hand, such a pure speech fitted in with the one who said: May Allah protect me. My Lord has shown so much kindness towards me. Should I, then, misbehave like this? And my Lord, I prefer imprisonment to that to which they invite me. If Thou dost not ward off their cunning devices from me, I might be caught in their snares. Therefore one cannot ascribe such a pure speech to the wife of Al-Aziz unless there is a clear clue showing that by that time she had repented and believed and mended her ways, but there is no such clue. Thus it is clear that this speech must have been made by Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him).

وَمَآ اُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِىْ ۚ اِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَاَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوْٓءِ اِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّىْ ۚ اِنَّ رَبِّىْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝٥٣

(12-53) I do not seek to acquit myself; for surely one's self prompts one to evil except him to whom my Lord may show mercy. Verily my Lord is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِىْ بِهٖٓ اَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِىْ ۚ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهٗ قَالَ اِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِيْنٌ اَمِيْنٌ ۝٥٤

(12-54) The king said: "Bring him to me. I will select him exclusively for my own service." So when Joseph spoke to him the king said: "You are now one of established position, fully-trusted by us." (47)

(47) It implied this: we have such a high opinion of you that we can safely entrust you with the highest office of responsibility in the country."

(47a) As this verse has given rise to some important questions, let us consider these one by one.

The first question is: Was it an application made by Prophet Joseph to the king for some post? In the light of the preceding explanatory notes, it would have become obvious that

it was neither an application nor a request made by an ambitious person who had been on the lookout for an opportune moment for its submission, and no sooner did the king express his approval of him than he presented his request before him. As a matter of fact, this was a sort of proposal, giving his assent to the great desire of the king and the courtiers that he should be appointed as governor over the land. For, according to the Talmud, the Hebrew has proved himself wise and skillful, and "...surely there can be none more discrete than myself to whom God has made known all these things." The king, his courtiers, his princes, officers, and men of rank, had by that time, come to know and recognize his true worth and had had experience of his moral superiority during the last decade of the vicissitudes of his life. He had proved that there was none equal to him in honesty, righteousness, forbearance, self discipline, generosity, intelligence and understanding. They knew and believed that he was the only one who knew how to guard and utilize the resources of the land and could be safely entrusted with them. Therefore, as soon as he showed his willingness, they heartily put these in his trust. This is also confirmed by the Bible that the king had formed a very high opinion of Prophet Joseph. He said to his servants: Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? Above all, he said to Prophet Joseph: There is none so discreet and wise as thou art. (Gen. 41: 38-39). Accordingly, therefore, the king, of his own accord, set him over his house and land. (Gen. 41: 41).

Let us now take up the second question: What was the nature of the powers that were entrusted to Prophet Joseph? This is important because those who are not well versed in the Quran have been misled by the words in this verse and by his subsequent work of the distribution of grain. They wrongly conclude from these that this post was like the present day posts of a "Treasury Officer" or a "Famine Commissioner" or a "Finance Minister" etc. etc. In fact, it was none of these, for, according to the Quran and the Bible and the Talmud, Prophet Joseph had been invested with the full powers and privileges of a ruler. That is why he sat on the throne (Ayat 100) and they used the title of malik, king, for him. (Ayat 72). He himself was grateful to Allah for bestowing the kingdom on him. (Ayat 101). Above all, Allah Himself

testifies to this fact: Thus We gave power to Joseph in the land, so he had every right to take possession of any piece of it, if he so desired. (Ayat 56). As regards the Bible, it says: And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.... and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt, and called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah (savior of the world). (Gen. 41: 40-45). And according to the Talmud, when his brothers returned with their father, Prophet Jacob, from Egypt, they said about Prophet Joseph: The king of Egypt is mighty potentate, over his people he is supreme; upon his word they go out and upon his word they come in; his word governs, and the voice of his master, Pharaoh, is not required.

Another pertinent question is: What was the object for which Prophet Joseph made a proposal for powers in the land? Did he offer his services for the enforcement of the laws of a non-Muslim state? Or did he intend to establish the cultural, moral and political systems of Islam by taking the powers of government in his own hands? As for its answer let us quote the comments on this (Verse 55) by Allamah Zamakhshari in his Kashshaf. He says, "When Prophet Joseph proposed: Please place all the resources of the country under my trust, he meant to get an opportunity for enforcing the commandments of Allah and for establishing truth and justice, and to gain that power which is essential for fulfilling the mission for which the Messengers are sent. He did not make this demand for the love of kingdom or for worldly desires and ambitions. He did this because he knew well that there was none else who could perform that work.

In fact, the above question leads to a very important and basic issues. These are: Was Joseph a Prophet of Allah or not? If he was, does the Quran put forward such a conception of a Prophet that he himself should (as they allege Prophet Joseph did) offer his services to a system of unbelief to carry on its work on un-Godly principles? Nay, it leads to a more delicate and important question: Was he a righteous person or not? And, if he was, could it ever be expected that he would (according to their interpretation,) practically accept the theory that Sovereignty

belongs to the king and not to Allah, whereas in the prison he preached, "Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah (Ayat 40)? For if, as they interpret, he submitted an application for service to the king, it meant that he did so against his own principles which he inculcated while in prison: “Which is better: various gods or the One Omnipotent Allah?” As the king of Egypt was one of the gods they had set up, so to offer services to carry on the work of the un-Islamic system under the existing un-Islamic law would have been tantamount to acknowledging the king as his Lord. Are they prepared to place Prophet Joseph in that position?

It is an irony that such Muslims as interpret this verse in this way, lower the character of Prophet Joseph. They have evinced the same mentality that the Jews had developed during the period of their degeneration. When they became morally and mentally depraved, they deliberately began to represent their Prophets and saints as people of low character like themselves in order to justify their own degraded characters and to make room for excuses for going still lower. Likewise, when the Muslims came under the sway of non-Muslim governments, they wanted to serve under them, but the teachings of Islam and the patterns of their worthy forefathers stood in their way and they felt ashamed of this. So, in order to pacify their consciences, they sought refuge in this verse and by its misinterpretation thought that that great Prophet had made an application for a post to serve under a non-Muslim under un-Islamic laws. Whereas the Prophet’s own life taught the lesson that even a single Muslim could all by himself bring about the Islamic revolution in a whole country by his pure Islamic character, his faith, intelligence and wisdom and that a true believer is able to conquer, by the proper use of his moral character, a whole country without any army, ammunition or material provisions.

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِیْ عَلٰی خَزَآئِنِ الْاَرْضِ ۚ اِنِّیْ حَفِیْظٌ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۵۵﴾

(12-55) Joseph said: "Place me in charge of the treasures of the land. I am a good keeper and know my task well."

وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنۡهَا حَيۡثُ يَشَآءُ ؕ نُصِيۡبُ بِرَحۡمَتِنَا مَنۡ نَّشَآءُ وَلَا نُضِيۡعُ اَجۡرَ الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ۵۶

(12-56) Thus did We establish Joseph in the land so that he could settle wherever he pleased. (48) We bestow favour, out of Our Mercy, on whomsoever We please, and We do not cause the reward of those who do good to go to waste.

(48) This is to show that the whole land of Egypt was under his complete control, as if it belonged to him and he could claim any piece of it as his, and there was no piece of it that could be withheld from him. The early commentators have also made the same comment on this verse. For instance, Allamah Ibn Jarir Tabari, on the authority of Ibn Zaid, says that this verse means: We made Joseph the owner of all those things that were in Egypt, and in this part of the world he could do whatever he liked and wherever he liked for he had been given complete authority over this land. So much so that he could bring Pharaoh under his sway and become his master, if he so desired. He has quoted another thing from Mujahid, who is one of the most learned commentators, to the effect that the King of Egypt had embraced Islam through Prophet Joseph.

وَ لَاَجۡرُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ خَيۡرٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَكَانُوۡا يَتَّقُوۡنَ ۵۷

(12-57) Surely the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and act in a God-fearing way. (49)

(49) This is a warning against a misunderstanding that one might have had from the preceding verse that kingdom and power were the real ultimate rewards for virtue and righteousness, for the best reward that a believer should desire and strive for will be the one that Allah will bestow upon believers in the Hereafter.

وَجَآءَ اِخۡوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِ فَعَرَفَهُمۡ وَهُمۡ لَهٗ مُنۡكِرُوۡنَ ۵۸

(12-58) And Joseph's brothers came to Egypt and presented themselves before him. (50) He recognized them, but they did not know him. (51)

(50) The events of several years after his coming into power have been left out for the sake of brevity, and the story has been resumed from the time when the brothers of Prophet Joseph came to Egypt, and paved the way for the eventual settlement of the Israelites in Egypt. It will, however, be worthwhile to have a glimpse of those events. During the first seven years of his reign, there was abundance of food as he had predicted while interpreting the dream of the king. Accordingly he adopted all the measures he had put before the king concerning the years of plenty. Then the seven years of scarcity began and famine reigned not only over Egypt but all over the adjoining countries. Accordingly, Syria, Palestine, Trans Jordan and the Northern part of Arabia began to suffer from the scarcity of food, but there was plenty of it in Egypt in spite of famine because of the wise steps Prophet Joseph had taken as a safeguard. That was why his brothers, like other neighboring people, were forced by circumstances to go to Egypt and present themselves before him. It appears that Prophet Joseph had so arranged things that no foreigner was allowed to buy food without a special permit from him. Therefore when the brothers reached Egypt, they might have had to present themselves before him for obtaining the special permit for buying the fixed quantity allowed under the famine regulations.

(51) It is no wonder that his brothers could not recognize Prophet Joseph, for, when they cast him into the well, he was merely a lad of seventeen and at the time of their meeting, he was a grown up man of thirty eight years or so. Naturally, he must have changed in form during this long period. Besides, they could never have imagined that the brother whom they had cast into the well had become the ruler of Egypt.

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ ۚ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(12-59) And when he had prepared for them their provisions, Joseph said: "Bring to me your other brother from your father. Do you not see that I give full measure and am most hospitable?

فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ تَاۡتُوۡنِىۡ بِهٖ فَلَا كَيۡلَ لَـكُمۡ عِنۡدِىۡ وَلَا تَقۡرَبُوۡنِ ۝٦٠

(12-60) If you do not bring him to me, you shall have no corn from me; and do not even attempt to come close to me." (52)

(52) As the Quran has omitted the details, someone might be at a loss to know as to how he brought Benjamin into the conversation with his brothers, and why he insisted on them to bring him with them, when he intended to keep his own identity secret from them. For, obviously these things might have led to the revelation of that secret. But a little thinking will show that he could have very easily and naturally led the conversation up to Benjamin without arousing their curiosity. As there were strict restrictions on the purchase of food, everyone was permitted to buy only a fixed quantity of it. Most probably the ten brothers had applied for food for their father and the eleventh brother as well. At this Prophet Joseph might have asked the reason why their father and brother had not personally come for it. Then he might have accepted the excuse for their father that he was old and blind but he would have expressed his doubts about their excuse for their brother that he was their step brother and the father would not send him with them and so forth. Then he might have declared: Well, this time we give you as much food as you have asked for, but the next time you come here you should bring your step brother with you; otherwise you will not get any food at all because of this false statement of yours. Along with this threat, he tried to win them over by reminding them of his liberal and generous treatment with them, because he yearned for the sight of his younger brother, and was anxious to know how his family had fared during his absence.

The above is a simple and natural explanation of the matter. Thus this part of the story as given in the Bible (Gen. chapters 42 and 43) appears to be far fetched, exaggerated, unreal and, therefore, unreliable.

قَالُوۡا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنۡهُ اَبَاهُ وَاِنَّا لَفٰعِلُوۡنَ ۝٦١

(12-61) They said: "We will surely try to prevail over our father to send him. Be sure we shall do so."

وَ قَالَ لِفِتْيٰنِهِ اجْعَلُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِيْ رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُوْنَهَآ اِذَا انْقَلَبُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾

(12-62) And Joseph said to his servants: "Put surreptitiously in their packs the goods they had given in exchange for corn." Joseph did so expecting that they would find it when they returned home. Feeling grateful for this generosity, they might be inclined to return to him.

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَبِيْهِمْ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَآ اَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ وَ اِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿۶۳﴾

(12-63) When they returned to their father they said: "Father! We have been denied further supply of corn. So send with us our brother that we may bring the supplies. We shall be responsible for his protection."

قَالَ هَلْ اٰمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا كَمَآ اَمِنْتُكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَخِيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا ۪ وَّ هُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿۶۴﴾

(12-64) The father said: "Shall I trust you with regard to him as I had trusted you earlier with regard to his brother? Allah is the Best Protector and is the Most Merciful."

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوْا مَتٰعَهُمْ وَجَدُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ قَالُوْا يٰۤاَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِيْ ؕ هٰذِهٖ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا
وَنَمِيْرُ اَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ اَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيْرٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَّسِيْرٌ ۝٦٥

(12-65) And when they opened their things they found that their goods had been given back to them. Thereupon they cried: "Father! What else would we desire? Look, even our goods have been given back to us, so we shall go now and bring supplies for our family, we shall protect our brother, and bring another camel-load of corn. That additional supply will be easily secured."

قَالَ لَنْ اُرْسِلَهٗ مَعَكُمْ حَتّٰى تُؤْتُوْنِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَتَاْتُنَّنِيْ بِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّحَاطَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اٰتَوْهُ
مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ ۝٦٦

(12-66) Their father said: "I shall never send him with you until you give me a solemn promise in the name of Allah that you will bring him back to me, unless you yourselves are surrounded." Then after they had given him their solemn promise, he said. "Allah watches over what we have said."

وَقَالَ يٰبَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوْا مِنْۢ بَابٍ وَّاحِدٍ وَّادْخُلُوْا مِنْ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ ؕ وَمَاۤ اُغْنِيْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ۝٦٧

(12-67) And he enjoined them: "My sons! Do not enter the city by one gate; rather enter it by different gates. I can be of no help to you against Allah. Allah's command alone prevails. In Him have I put my trust and in Him should all those who have faith put their trust." (53)

(53) Prophet Jacob’s great concern over this journey of his sons was due to the fact that his youngest son, Benjamin, was to accompany them. He was anxious about his safety because he had already had a bad experience of his son Joseph. Naturally his heart must have been full of such misgivings that it might be his last meeting with his other beloved son. Though he had full trust in Allah and was patiently resigned to His will, but, as a human being, advised his sons to take certain precautionary measures. In order to understand the significance of this precautionary measure of entering the capital by different gates, we should

have a glimpse of the political conditions of that period. As the Israelites lived on the Eastern frontier of Egypt as independent clans, they were looked at with suspicion like all frontier people. Therefore Prophet Jacob feared that if they entered the city in a group, they might be taken for a gang of suspects, especially during that time of famine. Thus there was an apprehension of some severe action being taken against them as if they had come there for organized robbery. That was why he gave them this allowance that if under such adverse circumstances there was any trouble, he would not accuse them of breach of the pledge for the safety of Benjamin.

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَهُمْ اَبُوْهُمْ ؕ مَّا كَانَ يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا حَاجَةً فِيْ نَفْسِ يَعْقُوْبَ قَضٰىهَا ؕ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝۶۸

(12-68) And it so happened that when they entered the city (by many gates) as their father had directed them, this precautionary measure proved ineffective against Allah's will. There was an uneasiness in Jacob's soul which he so tried to remove. Surely he was possessed of knowledge owing to the knowledge that We bestowed upon him. But most people do not know the truth of the matter. (54)

(54) "Most of mankind do not know" how Prophet Jacob was able to hold the balance between trust in Allah and adoption of precautionary measures. This was because Allah had favored him with the real knowledge. That was why he took all those measures which were dictated by common sense, deep thinking and experience. He admonished them for their ill treatment with their brother Joseph so that they should not dare repeat it in the case of Benjamin. He took a solemn pledge from them in the name of Allah that they would take good care of the safety of their step brother. Then he advised them to be on their guard against the dangerous political situation and to enter the capital by different gates so as not to give cause for alarm and suspicion. In short, as far as it was humanly possible, he took all the precautionary measures to avoid every possible risk. On the other hand, he always kept this thing in view and expressed it that no human precautionary measure could avert the enforcement of

Allah’s will. And that the real protection was Allah’s protection, and that one should not rely on the precautionary measures but on the favor of Allah. Obviously only that person who has the real knowledge can keep such a balance in his words and deeds, who knows what kind of efforts are demanded of his human faculties bestowed by Allah for the solution of worldly problems, who also realizes that it is Allah alone Who has the power to make them a success or a failure. This is what most people do not understand. Some of them rely merely on their efforts and measures and discard trust in Allah, while there are others who rely merely on trust in Allah and do not adopt any practical measure to solve their problem.

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوۡا عَلٰى يُوۡسُفَ اٰوٰۤى اِلَيۡهِ اَخَاهُ ؕ قَالَ اِنِّىۡۤ اَنَا اَخُوۡكَ فَلَا تَبۡتَئِسۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۶۹﴾

(12-69) When they presented themselves before Joseph, he took his brother aside to himself and said: "Verily I am your own brother Joseph; so do not grieve over the manner they have treated you." (55)

(55) The entire story of their reunion after a separation of twenty years or so has been summed up in this brief sentence. In all probability Prophet Joseph might have told him the story of the vicissitudes that ultimately had led to his high rank, and Benjamin in his turn might have related the story of the ill treatment of the heartless step brothers. Then Prophet Joseph might have reassured him that he would not be allowed to go back with them but remain with him. It is also possible that the plan to retain him there, without disclosing the secret of Prophet Joseph’s identity, would have then been thought out and decided upon.

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمۡ بِجَهَازِهِمۡ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِىۡ رَحۡلِ اَخِيۡهِ ثُمَّ اَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ اَيَّتُهَا الۡعِيۡرُ اِنَّكُمۡ لَسٰرِقُوۡنَ ﴿۷۰﴾

(12-70) Then, while Joseph was having their provisions loaded, he put his drinking-cup in his brother's saddlebag. (56) And then a herald cried: "Travellers, you are thieves." (57)

(56) In all probability, Prophet Joseph put the cup in his brother’s pack with his knowledge and consent, as may be inferred from the preceding verse. Obviously, Prophet Joseph desired to free his brother from the oppression of the cruel step brothers and he himself was reluctant to go back with them. But this could not be done directly and openly without disclosing his own identity, which was not then expedient under the circumstances. Therefore both the brothers might have thought out this plan, though this would have put the younger brother in an embarrassing situation for the time being because of his involvement in a case of theft. But they had adopted this plan because afterwards both the brothers could clear it easily by disclosing the real matter.

(57) There is nothing in this verse nor in the succeeding verses to show that Prophet Joseph took his servants in his confidence in regard to this matter, and instructed them to bring a false accusation against the travelers. The simple explanation of the incident may be this. The cup might have been quietly and secretly put in the pack. Afterwards when the servants did not find it, they might have come to the inevitable conclusion that it must have been stolen by the travelers who were staying there.

قَالُوۡا وَ اَقۡبَلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمۡ مَّاذَا تَفۡقِدُوۡنَ ﴿۷۱﴾

(12-71) Turning back they asked: "What have you lost?"

قَالُوۡا نَفۡقِدُ صُوَاعَ الۡمَلِكِ وَلِمَنۡ جَآءَ بِهٖ حِمۡلُ بَعِيۡرٍ وَّاَنَا بِهٖ زَعِيۡمٌ ﴿۷۲﴾

(12-72) The officials said: "We have lost the king's cup." (And their chief added): "He who brings it shall have a camel-load of provisions, I guarantee that."

قَالُوۡا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدۡ عَلِمۡتُمۡ مَّا جِئۡنَا لِنُفۡسِدَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سٰرِقِيۡنَ ﴿۷۳﴾

(12-73) They said: "By Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to act corruptly in this land, nor are we those who steal."

قَالُوۡا فَمَا جَزَآؤُهٗۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ كٰذِبِيۡنَ ﴿۷۴﴾

(12-74) The officials said: "If you are lying, what will be the penalty for him who has stolen?"

قَالُوۡا جَزَآؤُهٗ مَنۡ وُّجِدَ فِىۡ رَحۡلِهٖ فَهُوَ جَزَآؤُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۷۵﴾

(12-75) They replied: "He in whose saddlebag the cup is found, he himself shall be its recompense." Thus do we punish the wrong-doers. (58)

(58) It should be kept in mind that these people were the descendants of Prophet Abraham. Therefore they put forward his law regarding a thief, that is, the thief should be made the bondsman of the one whose goods he had stolen.

فَبَدَاَ بِاَوۡعِيَتِهِمۡ قَبۡلَ وِعَآءِ اَخِيۡهِ ثُمَّ اسۡتَخۡرَجَهَا مِنۡ وِّعَآءِ اَخِيۡهِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كِدۡنَا لِيُوۡسُفَ ؕ مَا كَانَ لِيَاۡخُذَ اَخَاهُ فِىۡ دِيۡنِ الۡمَلِكِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ نَرۡفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنۡ نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَفَوۡقَ كُلِّ ذِىۡ عِلۡمٍ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۷۶﴾

(12-76) Then Joseph began searching their bags before searching his own brother's bag. Then he brought forth the drinking-cup from his brother's bag. Thus did We contrive to

support Joseph. (59) He had no right, according to the religion of the king (i.e. the law of Egypt), to take his brother, unless Allah so willed. (60) We exalt whomsoever We will over others by several degrees. And above all those who know is the One Who truly knows.

(59) Now let us consider the question: How did Allah directly support Prophet Joseph with His plan? It is obvious that the plan of placing the cup in Benjamin's pack was thought out and executed by Joseph himself. And it is also obvious that the royal servants checked their packs as a matter of routine for such is the procedure that is generally followed on such occasions. There is nothing in this passage that might be called supernatural support by Allah except that the servants asked the brothers to prescribe the punishment for the thief, and they answered that he should be made a bondsman. The sentence that follows also confirms this interpretation.

(60) Had Allah willed it, He would not have removed the flaw in the plan of Prophet Joseph. It was this: he could seize his brother according to his plan only by the help of the king's law, but it was not worthy of a Prophet of Allah to apply that un-Islamic law to his own personal case. For he had taken political power in his hands in order to establish gradually the Islamic law and not to enforce and keep the king's law in vogue. Had Allah willed it, He would have left no other course for His Prophet except to have resort to the un-Islamic law. But He did not will it so because He did not like to tarnish the fair name of His Prophet. Therefore he made the servants inquire from the brothers (an unusual thing) about the punishment of a thief and they stated the law of Prophet Abraham. Thus not only was the flaw removed, but also no room was left for the brothers to raise any objection against this on the plea that they were not Egyptians, and therefore the law of the land could not be applied against them. As has already been pointed out, this was the support of Allah to which He has referred in the two subsequent verses as a token of His favor and a sign of the perfection of His knowledge.

The favor of Allah was that He saved Prophet Joseph from applying the un-Islamic law of the king of Egypt to his personal case, for he was liable to do so under the stress of human weakness. And there can be no greater favor for one than this that Allah Himself should arrange to guard his high moral position. It should, however, be noted that such a high rank is awarded only to those who prove themselves to be righteous in very hard trials.

By removing the flaw in his plan, Allah showed that His knowledge was far superior to the knowledge of those, whom (like Prophet Joseph) He had endowed with knowledge.

In this connection, there are some other points worthy of consideration and we will deal with them briefly.

(1) Generally the words are translated like this: Joseph could not seize his brother by the law of the king, or Joseph was not authorized to seize his brother according to the law of the king. In other words, it means: He could not do this, as there was no provision for it in the king's law. Whereas it means this: He ought not to have seized him by the king's law, as it did not behoove him to do so. This version is open to two objections. Firstly, this is against the Quranic usage which usually means, it did not behoove him, it was not right for him and he ought not to have done this. For instance, this is what it means in the following verses.

Indeed, Islam alone is the right way in the sight of Allah. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 18). Whosoever will adopt any other way than the way of Islam, it shall not be accepted. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 85). Secondly, such a version is meaningless, for there could have been no reason why he had not the power to seize him for theft according to the law of the king. Can there be any kingdom without having a law for taking action against a thief?

(2) As the Quran uses the word which connotes the king's way of life in addition to the king's law, it helps to understand the meaning of the sentence under discussion. For it is obvious that the Prophet was sent to establish the way of Allah and not the un-Islamic way of the king. Though by that time he

had only partially succeeded in this mission, it was not proper and worthy of a Prophet to adopt the way of the king for his own personal case. Though there was no legal hindrance in his way to seize his brother according to the king's law, nevertheless, it was inappropriate for him, as a Prophet, to adopt the king's way which he had hitherto scrupulously avoided as far as his own person was concerned. Thus it is clear that its appropriate interpretation will be this: It did not behoove Joseph to seize his brother by the king's law.

(3) Besides this, by using the word for the law of the land, Allah has denoted the vast comprehension of the word deen and this cuts at the root of the conception of deen of those people who confine the scope of the message of the Prophets to mere worship of One Allah and believe that it has nothing to do with the cultural, political, social, judicial, legal and other mundane affairs of life. Or, they opine that, if at all it has any concern with those matters, it is merely to give some instructions of an optional nature in regard to these, and leave it to the believers to adopt these or their own man made laws, because, they think, there is no harm even in adopting the latter course. This erroneous conception of deen, which has been in vogue among the Muslims for a long time, has been responsible for rendering them neglectful of making exertions for the establishment of the Islamic way of life. As a result of this misconception of deen, they became reconciled to un-Islamic ways of unbelief and ignorance. Nay, they considered this misconception of theirs to be the pattern set by Prophet Joseph and became willing helpers and servants of these un-Islamic systems. Whereas this verse categorically refutes this misconception by declaring that the law of the land is as much a part of the deen of Allah as Salat, Hajj, Fast, and Zakat are. Therefore, the demand of the acceptance of ad-deen made in (Ayat 19 and Ayat 85 of Surah Aal-Imran), that is, "Indeed, Islam alone is the right way, in the sight of Allah" and "Whosoever will adopt any other way than the way of Islam, it shall not be accepted", includes laws as well as Salat and other obligatory duties prescribed by Allah. Therefore the exclusion of this part of deen from any system would incur the displeasure of Allah.

(4) The above interpretation, however, is open to one objection. It does, at least, imply that an un-Islamic way was in vogue in Egypt at the time, when Prophet Joseph was, even according to the present commentator, the supreme head of the country. It is, therefore, a proof that that Prophet himself was enforcing the un-Islamic law of the king. What difference, then, could it have made, if Prophet Joseph had followed, in his personal case too, the system of law of the king which he himself was enforcing instead of the system of law of Prophet Abraham? Most certainly this would have made a vast difference because it would have compromised his position as a Prophet, because he was trying to establish the Islamic Way of life, which naturally could have been accomplished gradually in course of time, during which the king's law would have inevitably remained in vogue. The same thing happened in Arabia during the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Al-Madinah, which took nine years to establish the Islamic system in its entirety. During that period, several un-Islamic laws remained in vogue. For instance, drinking, interest, the un-Islamic laws of inheritance and marriage and some wrong ways of trade, etc. had to continue for some time. Likewise the civil and penal codes of Islam took some time for their complete introduction. So there is nothing strange in this that the king's law continued to be in vogue during the first nine years or so of Prophet Joseph's reign. But the continuance of the un-Islamic law of the king during the period of transition is no argument to prove that Allah's Prophet was sent to follow the way of the king and not to establish the way of Allah.

قَالُ وِ□□ا لِ يَّسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ اَخٌ لَّ مِ قَبْلُ فَاَسَرَّ ا يُ سُفُ فِ نَفْسِ وَلَمْ يُبْدِا لَ مْ
قَالَ اَ نِ□تُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَالا اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُنَو ٧٧□

(12-77) They said: "No wonder that he steals for a brother of his stole before." (61) But Joseph kept his reaction to himself without disclosing the truth to them. He merely said to himself: "You are an evil lot. Allah knows well the truth of the accusation that you are making against me (to my face)."

(61) As regards to the question why it was not worthy of Prophet Joseph to apply the king's law to his personal case, its

best answer is again found in the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). During the interim period, when the laws of ignorance had not yet been replaced by Islamic laws, other Muslims went on drinking wine and taking interest as before, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) never practiced any of these things. Likewise some un- Islamic laws of marriage, such as taking in marriage of real sisters at one and the same time, were practiced, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) never practiced any such thing. Thus it is clear, that there was a difference between leaving in vogue some un-Islamic laws during the period of the evolution of the Islamic law and practicing the same. Had Prophet Joseph applied the king's law to his own case, it would have meant that he had lent his seeming sanction to that law. But it is obvious that a Prophet, who is sent to eliminate the ways of ignorance cannot follow these even under the temporary leave that is given to others.

Their position and dissociated themselves from Benjamin, declaring that he was a thief like his brother Joseph. It is obvious that this was a false accusation the clever brothers had invented on the spot. But it is an instance of the malice these brothers bore to their two step brothers, and is also the answer to the question why Prophet Joseph desired to keep his brother with him.

قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗٓ اَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝٧٨

(12-78) They said: "O powerful chief (al-aziz)! (62) His father is an age-stricken man, (and in order that he may not suffer) seize one of us in his stead. We indeed consider you an excellent person."

(62) The use of the title Al-Aziz, ruler of the land, with which they addressed Prophet Joseph has given rise to the confusion that he held the same office as the husband of Zuleikha held before him. Then this misunderstanding let the commentators to the invention of further comments, such as. Al-Aziz had died and Prophet Joseph was appointed in his place, and Zuleikha was rejuvenated by a miracle and was married to him by the king.

They have not stopped at this. They have, somehow or other, discovered even the conversation that took place between Prophet Joseph and Zuleikha in the first night of their marriage. In fact, all this is mere fiction, for, as has already been pointed out, the word Al-Aziz was the Arabic translation or equivalent of some Egyptian title, and was not the designation of any particular office. It was merely a title used for the high ones in Egypt like “His Excellency” or “Your Excellency”, etc. As regards to the said marriage, this fiction has been built on the story of Prophet Joseph’s marriage in the Bible and the Talmud. According to these, he was married with Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah. As the name of the husband of Zuleikha was Potiphar, the two names got confused together. Accordingly, when the story was handed down from the traditions of the Israelites from one commentator to the other, the name Potiphar got interchanged with Poti-pherah because the two were so like each other in sound. Consequently, the daughter in the story was replaced by wife. Then Potiphar was killed in order to facilitate the marriage. Then the only remaining difficulty, that is, the disparity of their ages, was gotten over with the help of a miracle. She was rejuvenated so completely as to enable her to become the worthy wife of the ruler of the land.

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنۡ نَّاۡخُذَ اِلَّا مَنۡ وَّجَدۡنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنۡدَهٗۤ ۙ اِنَّاۤ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۷۹﴾

(12-79) Joseph said: "Allah forbid that we should seize any except him with whom we found our good. (63) Were we to do so, we would surely be one of the wrong-doers."

(63) The use of the words “with whom we have found our property” instead of the word thief is very significant. Prophet Joseph avoided the use of the word thief for his brother because he was not really a thief. This is called touriyah, that is, to put a cover over a reality or to hide a reality. Such a practice is allowed by the Muslim law under certain conditions and with certain limitations. It may be practiced not to gain any selfish end, but to ward off some evil or to protect and save an oppressed person from some oppressor, provided that no other course might have been left except saying something against the truth or of having a

resort to a deceitful device. It is obvious that in such a case, a righteous person will not tell a blunt lie or resort to an open deceit. Instead, he will say something or do something that might not be strictly truthful or strictly right, yet at the same time is not a blunt lie, so that he might hide the reality to ward off the evil. Such a practice is lawful, legally and morally, provided that it is not practiced to gain some personal or selfish ends but to ward off a greater evil with a lesser evil. Accordingly, Prophet Joseph scrupulously fulfilled all the conditions in this case. He placed the cup in the pack of his brother with his consent, but he did not ask his servants to make a search of his pack and accuse him of theft. After this, when the servants brought the brothers before him as suspects, he quietly rose from his seat and began to make a search of their packs. Then afterwards, when the brothers requested that one of them should be taken instead of Benjamin, he answered them back in their own words that he would detain only that person in whose possession the cup was found and none else.

Instances of such a practice during his campaigns are found in the life history of the Prophet (peace be upon him). And this cannot be regarded as morally objectionable according to any moral or legal standard.

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْـَٔسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا نَجِيًّا ؕ قَالَ كَبِيْرُهُمْ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اَبَاكُمْ قَدْ اَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُّمْ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ ۚ فَلَنْ اَبْرَحَ الْاَرْضَ حَتّٰى يَاْذَنَ لِيْۤ اَبِيْۤ اَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ لِيْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ۸۰

(12-80) Then, when they had despaired of Joseph they went to a corner and counselled together. The eldest of them said: "Do you not know that your father has taken a solemn promise from you in the name of Allah, and you failed in your duty towards Joseph? So I will not depart from this land until my father permits me, or Allah pronounces His judgement in my favour. He is the best of those who judge."

اِرْجِعُوْۤا اِلٰۤى اَبِيْكُمْ فَقُوْلُوْا يٰۤاَبَانَاۤ اِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ ۚ وَمَا شَهِدْنَاۤ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حٰفِظِيْنَ ۸۱

(12-81) So go back to your father and tell him: "Father! Your son has certainly been guilty of stealing. We did not see him stealing but testify according to what we know, and obviously we had no power to keep watch over that what is altogether hidden from us.

وَسْـَٔلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِيْ كُنَّا فِيْهَا وَالْعِيْرَ الَّتِيْٓ اَقْبَلْنَا فِيْهَا ۗ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ۝٨٢

(12-82) You may inquire of the dwellers of the city where we were, and of the people of the caravan with whom we travelled. We are altogether truthful in what we say."

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ۗ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ۗ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَنِيْ بِهِمْ جَمِيْعًا ۗ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝٨٣

(12-83) The father heard the narration and said: "(All that is untrue). But your souls have made it easy for you to engage in a heinous act. (64) So, I will be graciously patient even at this. Allah may well bring them all back to me. He is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

(64) That is, you readily believed that my son, whom I know to be of a noble character, had committed the theft of a cup. You have behaved in his case just as you behaved in the case of his elder brother. You made away with him and then pretended, without any pangs of conscience, that a wolf had devoured him and now, with the same ease, you tell me that the other brother has committed a theft.

وَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ۝٨٤

(12-84) Then he turned his back to them, and said: "O my grief for Joseph!" His eyes whitened with grief and he was choked up with sorrow trying to suppress his grief.

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوْسُفَ حَتّٰى تَكُوْنَ حَرَضًا اَوْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْهٰلِكِيْنَ ۝٨٥

(12-85) The sons said: "By Allah! You will continue to remember Joseph until you will either consume yourself with grief, or will die."

قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اَشْكُوْا بَثِّيْ وَحُزْنِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٨٦

(12-86) He said: "I will address my sorrow and grief only to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know.

يٰبَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوْا فَتَحَسَّسُوْا مِنْ يُّوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ وَلَا تَايْـَٔسُوْا مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّهٗ لَا يَايْـَٔسُ مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝٨٧

(12-87) My sons! Go and try to find out about Joseph and his brother and do not despair of Allah's mercy. Verily only the unbelievers despair of Allah's mercy."

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ مَسَّنَا وَاَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُّزْجٰىةٍ فَاَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْزِى الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ ۝٨٨

(12-88) On going to Egypt they presented themselves to Joseph and said to him: "O chief! We and our family are struck with distress and have brought only a paltry sum. So give us corn in full measure, and give it to us in charity. (65) Allah rewards those who are charitable."

(65) That is, it will be charitable of you if you give us that much grain as we require to fulfill our needs, because the goods we have brought for its barter are of less value than of the grain we require.

قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ جٰهِلُوْنَ ۝٨٩

(12-89) When Joseph heard this (he could not hold himself and said): "Do you remember what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?"

قَالُوْٓا ءَاِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ يُوْسُفُ ۭ قَالَ اَنَا يُوْسُفُ وَهٰذَآ اَخِيْ قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا ۭ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝٩٠

(12-90) They exclaimed: "Are you indeed Joseph?" He said: "Yes, I am Joseph and this is my brother. Allah has surely been gracious to us. Indeed whoever fears Allah and remains patient, Allah does not allow the reward of such people to go to waste."

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِـِٕيْنَ ۝٩١

(12-91) They said: "We swear by Allah! Indeed Allah has chosen you in preference to us and we were truly guilty."

قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيۡبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡيَوۡمَ ؕ يَغۡفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمۡ ۫ وَ هُوَ اَرۡحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيۡنَ ۹۲

(12-92) He replied: "No blame lies with you today. May Allah forgive you. He is the Most Merciful of all those that are merciful.

اِذۡهَبُوۡا بِقَمِيۡصِىۡ هٰذَا فَاَلۡقُوۡهُ عَلٰى وَجۡهِ اَبِىۡ يَاۡتِ بَصِيۡرًا ۚ وَ اۡتُوۡنِىۡ بِاَهۡلِكُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ۹۳

(12-93) Take this shirt of mine and throw it over my father's face. He will regain his sight. And bring to me all your family."

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيْرُ قَالَ اَبُوْهُمْ اِنِّيْ لَاَجِدُ رِيْحَ يُوْسُفَ لَوْلَآ اَنْ تُفَنِّدُوْنِ ﴿٩٤﴾

(12-94) And as the caravan set out (from Egypt), their father said (in Canaan): "Indeed I smell the fragrance of Joseph. (66) I say so although you may think that I am doting."

(66) This is an instance of the extraordinary powers the Prophets possess. Prophet Jacob perceived in Canaan the smell of Prophet Joseph's shirt from such a distant place as Egypt as soon as the caravan started on the journey. At the same time it also shows, by contrast, that these powers of the Prophets are not inherent or personal characteristics but are bestowed on them by Allah as and when He wills. That is why Prophet Jacob could not perceive the smell of the clothes of Prophet Joseph as long as Allah did not will it, when he had been living in Egypt.

In this connection, it should also be noted that in contrast to the Quran which represents Prophet Jacob as a great Prophet who was able to perceive the smell of Prophet Joseph from such a long distance, the Bible represents him as an ordinary uncultured father. According to Genesis 45: 26-27, when they told him, saying: Joseph is yet alive and he is governor over all the land of Egypt, Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not, and only when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ اِنَّكَ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيْمِ ﴿٩٥﴾

(12-95) They said: "Surely you are still in your same old craze." (67)

(67) This remark shows that no member of his family except Prophet Joseph appreciated the true worth of Prophet Jacob. He himself was aware of the low state of their mental and moral condition. And it is one of the ironies of fate that the majority of the great personalities who made history got very little appreciation at home.

فَلَمَّآ اَنْ جَآءَ الْبَشِيْرُ اَلْقٰىهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيْرًا ۚ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾

(12-96) And when the bearer of good news came he threw Joseph's shirt over Jacob's face, whereupon he regained his sight, and said: "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?"

قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِـِٕيْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾

(12-97) They said: "Father! Pray for the forgiveness of our sins; we were truly guilty."

قَالَ سَوْفَ اَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّيْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٩٨﴾

(12-98) He said: "I shall pray to my Lord for your forgiveness, for He, and indeed He alone, is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful."

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰي يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰٓى اِلَيْهِ اَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوْا مِصْرَ اِنْ شَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾

(12-99) And when they went to Joseph, [68] he took his parents aside and said (to the members of his family): "Enter the city now, and if Allah wills, you shall be secure."

(68) It is worthwhile to take notice of the total number of Prophet Jacob's family members that migrated to Egypt with him, for it is closely connected with the problem that is raised concerning the total number of the Israelites who emigrated from there some five hundred years after this. According to the Bible, the total number of the family members was 70, including Prophet Joseph and his two sons, and excluding those daughters-in-law who did not belong to the family of Prophet Jacob. But according to the census figures given in Numbers, their number was about two million when they were counted in the wilderness of Sinai in the second year, after they come out of the land of Egypt. The problem is this: how is it possible that these three score and ten souls of his house had multiplied into two million souls during five hundred years or so?

It is obvious that no family can multiply to such a large number in five hundred years merely by the generative process. Thus the only other way in which their number could have been increased was proselytism. And there are sound reasons to believe that this must have been so. The Israelites were the descendants of Prophets. They had migrated to Egypt because of the power Prophet Joseph enjoyed there. And we have seen that he made full use of every opportunity he got for carrying out the work of the mission of Prophethood. Therefore it may reasonably be expected that the Israelites would have done their very best to convert the Egyptians to their faith of Islam during the five centuries of their power in Egypt. As a result of this the Egyptian converts to Islam would not only have changed their religion but also their culture so as to make them look quite different from the other Egyptians and look like the Israelites. Naturally the non Muslim Egyptians would have declared them to be foreigners just as the Hindus treat the Indian Muslims of today. By and by they themselves would have accepted this position and become members of the Israelite nationality. Afterwards, when the Egyptian nationalists began to persecute the alien Israelites, the Muslim Egyptians were also made a target of their tyranny. So when the Israelites migrated from Egypt, they, too, left their country along with them and began to be counted among them.

The above mentioned explanation is confirmed by the Bible also. For instance, it says “that when they left Egypt, the children of Israel journeyed from Remases to Suceoth....and a mixed multitude went up also with them....” (Exodus 12: 37-38) and “the mix multitude that was among them fell a lusting”. (Numbers 11: 4). Then by and by these non-Israelite converts to Islam began to be called the stranger. “One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance forever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and the one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.” (Numbers 15: 15-16). “And I charged your judges at that time, saying: Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with

him.” (Deut. 1: 16). Now it is not an easy thing to find out the exact term which was applied in the original Scriptures to the Egyptian converts to Islam, and which was afterwards changed into the stranger by the translators.

وَرَفَعَ اَبَوَيۡهِ عَلَى الۡعَرۡشِ وَخَرُّوۡا لَهٗ سُجَّدًا ۚ وَقَالَ يٰۤاَبَتِ هٰذَا تَاۡوِيۡلُ رُءۡيَاىَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ۖ قَدۡ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّىۡ حَقًّا ؕ وَقَدۡ اَحۡسَنَ بِىۡۤ اِذۡ اَخۡرَجَنِىۡ مِنَ السِّجۡنِ وَجَآءَ بِكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡبَدۡوِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ اَنۡ نَّزَغَ الشَّيۡطٰنُ بَيۡنِىۡ وَبَيۡنَ اِخۡوَتِىۡ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىۡ لَطِيۡفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الۡعَلِيۡمُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۱۰۰﴾

(12-100) And after they had entered the city, Joseph raised his parents to the throne (69) beside himself, and they (involuntarily) bowed in prostration before him. (70) Joseph said: "Father! This is the fulfilment of the vision I had before - one that My Lord has caused to come true. He was kind to me when He rescued me from the prison, and brought you from the desert after Satan had stirred discord between me and my brothers. Certainly my Lord is Subtle in the fulfilment of His will; He is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

(69) According to the Talmud, “when Joseph learned that his father was upon the way, he gathered together his friends and officers, and soldiers of the realm, attired in rich garments,....and formed a great company to meet Prophet Jacob on the way and escort him to Egypt. Music and gladness filled the land, and all the people, the women and the children, assembled on the house tops to view the magnificent display.” (H. Polano, p. 111).

(70) The interpretation of this verse has given rise to some serious misunderstandings, which are against the very fundamentals of the divine guidance. So much so that some people have gone to the extreme of making it lawful to prostrate before kings and saints as a mark of respect. Others more strict on this point have explained it away, saying, “In the former divine laws, it was unlawful only to prostrate in worship before others than Allah, though it was permissible to prostrate before others if it was done without the intention of worship, but now in the divine law given to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) it has been made absolutely unlawful.

Such misunderstandings as these have resulted from taking the words in this verse to mean “to perform sajadah” in the technical sense in which it is now used in the Islamic code, that is, “lying flat in such a way that the hands, the knees and the forehead touch the ground,” whereas the word sujjadan has been used here in its literal meaning of sajud “to bow down”. The parents and brothers of Prophet Joseph bowed down before him in accordance with the ancient custom among the people of the age, (and the custom is still in vogue among some people), who used to bow down before others to show their gratitude, or welcome them, or merely to salute them by placing their hand on the breast. There are many instances of this in the Bible. “....and when he (Abraham) saw them (the three men) corning towards him, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself towards the ground.” (Please refer to Arabic translation: Gen. 18: 32). Further on it says that when the children of Heth gave a field and a cave as a burying place for Sarah, Prophet Abraham was so grateful to them that “he stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth,” (Gen. 23: 7) and “Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.” (Gen. 23: 12). In both cases the words `bowed down' have been translated into (Sajada).

These and other like instances in the Bible are a conclusive proof of the fact that in this (Verse 100), the Quran has not used the word in its technical Islamic sense but in its literal sense.

Besides, those commentators are absolutely wrong who suppose that in the former laws, sajadah in the present Islamic sense was allowed as a mark of respect laws. For instance, during the Babylonian captivity of the Children of Israel, king Ahasuerus promoted Haman above all the princes and commanded all his servants to bow and reverence him, but Mordecai, who was a holy and righteous man among the Jews, bowed not, nor did him reverence. (Esther3: 1-2). The Talmud has elaborated this point in a way that is worth reading:

The servants of the king said to Mordecai: “Why wilt thou refuse to bow before Haman, transgressing thus the wishes of the king? Do we not bow before him?” “Yea are foolish,” answered Mordecai, “aye, wanting in reason. Listen to me. Shall a mortal, who must return to dust be glorified? Shall I bow down before one born of woman, whose days are short? When he is small he cries and weeps as a child; when he grows older sorrow and sighing are his portion; his days are full of wrath and anger, and at the end he returns to dust. Shall I bow to one like to him? No, I prostrate myself before the Eternal God, who lives forever. To Him the great Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and to no other will I bow.” (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, p. 172).

This speech which was made by a believer from among the Israelites a thousand years before the revelation of the Quran, is conclusive on the point. Thus there is absolutely no room for the performance of sajadah before any other than Allah.

رَبِّ قَدْ اٰتَيْتَنِىْ مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِىْ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَنْتَ وَلِيّٖ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِىْ مُسْلِمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِىْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾

(12-101) My Lord! You have bestowed dominion upon me and have taught me to comprehend the depths of things. O Creator of heavens and earth! You are my Guardian in this world and in the Hereafter. Cause me to die in submission to You, and join me, in the end, with the righteous." (71)

(71) The few sentences that were uttered by Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) at the happiest occasion of his life help depict the most graceful pattern of the virtues of a true believer. There is the man from the desert, whom his own brothers had, out of jealousy, attempted to kill, now sitting on the throne after passing through many vicissitudes of life. All the members of his family have been forced by famine to come before him for help. The same jealous brothers, who had made an attempt on his life, are now standing before him with downcast heads. Had there been a “successful man of the world” in his place, he would have used this opportunity for boasting of his greatness and bragging of his successes, and giving vent to his grievances and hurling

malicious taunts at his defeated enemies. In utter contrast to this, the true man of God behaves in a quite different way. Instead of boasting and bragging of his own greatness, he is grateful to his God Who had shown grace to him by raising him to such a high position of power, and for arranging his meeting with his people after such a long period of separation. Instead of giving vent to his grievances against his brothers, making taunts at them for their ill treatment, he does not make even a mention of such things but puts up a defense for them, saying that it was all due to Satan, who had stirred up strife between them: nay, he even puts it forward as a blessing in disguise, being one of the mysterious ways of Allah by which He had fulfilled His design of raising him to the throne. After saying these things in a few concise sentences, he at once turns to his Lord in gratitude for bestowing on him kingdom and wisdom, instead of letting him rot in the prison, and prays to Him to keep him as His faithful and obedient servant as long as he was alive, and to join him with the righteous people after his death. What a pure and high pattern of character.

It is strange that this speech of Prophet Joseph has neither found a place in the Bible nor in the Talmud, though these books are full of irrelevant and unimportant details of this story and others. It is an irony that these Books are void of those things that teach moral values and throw light on the real characters and the mission of the Prophets. Now that this story has come to an end, the readers are again reminded that this story of Prophet Joseph as given in the Quran is not a copy of the story given in the Bible and the Talmud for there are striking differences between them. A comparative study of these Books will show that the story in the Quran differs from that given in the other two Books in several very important parts. The Quran contains additional facts in some cases and omits certain facts in other cases or even refutes some parts as contained in the Bible and the Talmud. Therefore there is absolutely no room for anyone to allege that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) related this story merely in the form he heard it from the Israelites.

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ اَجْمَعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُوْنَ ١٠٢

(12-102) (O Muhammad), this is part of news from the Unseen that We reveal to you for you were not present with them when Joseph's brothers jointly resolved on a plot.

وَمَآ اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ١٠٣

(12-103) And most of the people, howsoever you might so desire, are not going to believe.

وَمَا تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍۗ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ١٠٤

(12-104) You do not seek from them any recompense for your service. (72) This is merely an admonition to all mankind. (73)

(72) In order to grasp the full significance of the underlying admonition implied in it, we must keep in view the background of the revelation of this story given in the introduction to this Surah. The Quraish themselves had invited the Prophet (peace be upon him) to a meeting that had been arranged for putting him to a test which was to show whether he was a true Prophet or not. When he arrived there, they put this question to him without any previous notice or intimation: why did the Israelites go to Egypt? In answer to this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this Surah then and there. As they themselves knew that this was an abrupt question and there had been no preparation for its answer beforehand, it was expected that they would believe in his Prophethood. But they were so obdurate that they did not believe in him even then. As Allah was aware of their intentions, he informed His Messenger beforehand, as if to say: Though you have come out successful in the test, to which they themselves put to you, yet most of them are not going to believe it because they are not sincere in their quest for the truth. That is why they will not believe even now when the revelation of this Surah has proved conclusively that the Quran is not being forged by you but is being sent down by Allah Himself. As their real aim and

intention is to reject your message anyhow, they will now invent another excuse for their denial.

This is not meant to remove any misunderstanding the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have cherished, but is merely an indirect warning to the questioners that Allah knew their intentions well. This was meant to warn them like this: O obdurate people, this Surah has been placed before you to serve as a mirror for you. You demanded a proof from Our Messenger that he was not forging the Quran: had you been reasonable and sincere people, you would have accepted the truth that has been established according to your own test, but you are obdurate people and are still denying it.

(73) This is another admonition more subtle than the one given above. Though this, too, has been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is meant for the unbelievers, as if to say: O people, consider your attitude towards the message from another point of view. Had you noticed anything in the mission and the message of Our Prophet that might have smelt of any self interest whatsoever, you would have been justified in rejecting it as the work of a selfish person. But you yourselves have experienced it that he has absolutely no self interest in his work and demands no recompense for the message, which is nothing but instruction for all the people of the world. Therefore you should listen to it and consider it without prejudice and make your decisions about it on merit and merit alone.

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ١٠٥

(12-105) How many (74) are the signs in the heavens and the earth which people pass by without giving any heed! (75)

(74) Now that the story of Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) has come to an end, the Quran has made use of the opportunity for conveying its basic message, for it does not tell stories merely for the sake of storytelling. As they themselves had invited the Prophet and were attentively listening to the story, the

essence of the message was presented in a few concise sentences (Ayats 105-111).

(75) This is to arouse people from their apathy towards the signs of Allah that lie scattered all over the earth and the heavens and to urge them to make a search for the reality by making right observations. As each and everything is not merely a thing but also a sign which points to the reality, a seeker after it should look at these with a look different from that of animals. This is because even an animal sees a tree, a mountain and water and takes it as a mere tree, a mountain or water, and with the help of his senses makes use of these according to his needs. But Allah has endowed man with a mind that is able to consider things in other than their physical and material aspects so that he may think deeply and make a search for the reality by means of these signs of Allah. The reason why people fail to discover the reality and go astray is that they do not consider things as signs and pay no heed to this aspect. Had they not deliberately shut their minds against the message of the Prophets, it would not have been difficult for them at all to understand it and get guidance from it.

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

(12-106) And most of them believe in Allah only when they associate others with Him in His Divinity.(76)

(76) They associate other deities with Allah because they do not pay heed to His signs, which serve as pointers to the right way. So they go astray from it and get lost in thorny bushes. Nevertheless, many of them do not lose sight of the reality entirely, and do not disbelieve in Allah as their Creator and Sustainer, but they get involved in shirk. That is, they do not deny the existence of God, but they believe that there are other deities who are also partners in His being, His attributes, His powers, and His rights. They should never have been involved in shirk, had they considered these signs in the heavens and the earth from this point of view, for in that case they would have discovered everywhere, in each and every one of them, the proofs of the Oneness of Allah.

اَفَاَمِنُ وۡۤا اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمۡ غٰشِيَةٌ مِّنۡ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغۡتَةً وَّهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾

(12-107) Do they, then, feel secure that an overwhelming chastisement shall not visit them, and the Hour shall not suddenly come upon them without their even perceiving it? (77)

(77) This question has been posed to rouse the people from their care free attitude towards life produced by temporary security from dangers, and by a feeling that there is a long life to enjoy: so the problems can be postponed safely to a distant future. This is obviously a wrong attitude, for no man has any guarantee that he will live up to a certain age: for no one knows when, where and how one would die. Therefore the questions meant to ask, “Does not your daily experience tell you that you knew nothing even a minute beforehand what your future was hiding for you? Therefore, wisdom demands that you should make preparations for it now, and consider seriously whether the path you are treading is the right path. Have you any real proof to show that it is right? Do you find any sound argument in the heavens and the earth to support your decision? Did the people who trod such a path before you reach their destinations safely and securely? Finally, do the results of following such a path, which are appearing in your own time and culture, confirm that you are treading the right path?

قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِيْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۣ عَلٰى بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ ۭ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۱۰۸

(12-108) Tell them plainly: "This is my way: I call you to Allah, on the basis of clear perception - both I and those who follow me. Allah - Glory be to Him - is free of every imperfection. (78) I have nothing to do with those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity."

(78) That is, Allah is absolutely free from such things that are ascribed to Him: He is free from the weaknesses and shortcomings which every believer in shirk ascribes to Him; He is free from all defects, evils and errors that must necessarily be ascribed to Him as a logical result of the conception of God hold by mushriks.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى ۭ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ۱۰۹

(12-109) The Messengers whom We raised before you, (O Muhammad), and to whom We sent down revelations, were only human beings, and were from among those living in earthly habitations. Have these people not travelled in the earth that they may observe the end of their predecessors? Certainly the abode of the Hereafter is much better for those (who accepted the call of the Messengers and) acted in a God-fearing manner. Will you still not act with good sense? (79)

(79) A very comprehensive subject has been condensed here into a couple of sentences, which may be expanded like this: “O Muhammad! these people do not listen to you because it is not an easy thing for them to believe you to be a Messenger of Allah just because you are a mere human being who was born in their own city among them and brought up like other people. But there is nothing strange in this. For this is not the first instance of its kind. All the Prophets, whom We sent before you, were also human beings and lived in the same habitations to which they were sent. It never happened that a stranger came to a town and declared,

“I have been sent as a Messenger to you. On the other hand, all the Prophets, Jesus, Moses, Abraham and Noah (peace be upon them all), who were raised for the reform of the people, were human beings who were born and brought up in their own habitations. Then it addresses the disbelievers directly, as if to say: Now it is for you to judge and decide whether you should accept the Messenger or reject him on such flimsy grounds as these. You have traveled abroad and seen the end of those people who rejected the message of their Prophets and followed their own desires. You have seen, on your journeys, the ruined habitations of the people of Aad, Thamud, Midian, Lot, and others. Have you not observed these as object lessons, for these warn you that they would meet with far worse consequences in the Hereafter, and that conversely, those who are pious and God fearing will have a very happy life?

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا فَنُجِّىَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ١١٠

(12-110) (It also happened with the earlier Messengers that for long they preached and people paid no heed) until the Messengers despaired of their people, and the people also fancied that they had been told lies (by the Messengers), then suddenly Our help came to the Messengers. And when such an occasion comes We rescue whom We will; as for the guilty, Our chastisement cannot be averted from them.

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِىْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ ؕ مَا كَانَ حَدِيْثًا يُّفْتَرٰى وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ١١١

(12-111) Certainly in the stories of the bygone people there is a lesson for people of understanding. What is being narrated in the Qur'an is no fabrication; it is rather confirmation of the Books that preceded it, and a detailed (80) exposition of everything, and a guidance and mercy for people of faith.

(80) That is, it gives details of everything that is required for the guidance of man. Some people take details of everything to

mean the details of everything in the world. So, when they do not find in it the details of mathematics, physics, medicine etc. etc. they become skeptical. Whereas the Quran claims to give the details of only one subject, “Guidance”, for which it has been sent down, and it does give the details of everything that is essential for it.